ACHIEVEMENTS OF CAVALRY

GENERAL SIR EVELYN WOOD
V.C. G.C.B. G.C.M.G.

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ACHIEVEMENTS OF CAVALRY

GENERAL VON BREDOW,

Who, on the 16th August, 1870, when leading six Squadrons, wrecked six Batteries, dispersed four Battalions, and checked the advance of an Army Corps.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF CAVALRY

BY

GENERAL SIR EVELYN WOOD
V.C., G.C.B., G.C.M.G., ETC.

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PREFACE.

SOME years ago, when commanding the Aldershot District, I came to the conclusion that our cavalry officers were being discouraged at field-days by the system of umpiring, which was faulty, in that it did not represent the probable results of war. This was so because it was assumed that the effect of rifle fire on Service nearly equalled that obtained on the ranges, and also because we over-estimated the value of Artillery practice when guns were laid on moving targets. Moreover, the application of the rules then in force was often to the prejudice of the Mounted branches. In conjunction with my friend and colleague, General Sir Drury Lowe, then commanding the Cavalry brigade, I endeavoured to correct such erroneous judgments, and to bring out truer solutions.

The consideration of the subject, and careful study of many military histories, has demonstrated to me how essential it is that cavalry officers should know when and how to charge, and when to refrain from the attack. The importance of that Arm of the Service is as great now as ever it was, but its

satisfactory employment, in these days of weapons possessing great range and precision, requires not only assiduous reading, but also experiences in all field duties.

In 1892, after consulting, and being encouraged by all the cavalry commanding officers then in the kingdom, I wrote for the *United Service Magazine*, in an abbreviated form, six studies for the assistance of such of my young comrades as are not fond of close reading in military history. Having since enlarged these six chapters, I now again offer them, with six additional studies, to my younger comrades, and to, I hope, a wider circle of readers. The amplification I have made was desirable in order that I might show the necessity for discipline and sound administration in armies, to enable cavalry to be successful; and I think it may also assist civilians, who are not usually conversant with the sequence of events in a campaign.

It will be observed that England, Poland, and Russia each furnished the troops for only one of the feats I have selected, Austria two, and France two, while North Germany is credited with five out of the twelve Achievements. This is to be accounted for, so far as our cavalry is concerned, by the fact that though it had many opportunities of achieving success in the Peninsular War, yet the leading of its commanders, being more indicative of courageous hearts than of well-stored minds, was often barren of results.

Cavalry officers can become efficient leaders, after adequate study, by two means:—

Firstly, by war service.

Secondly, by practice in cavalry, and combined manœuvres.

The former experience, costly in lives and money, is not often available, and the latter means has only been afforded to our Service during the last few years, and even in that time but to a very limited degree. The Prussians, on the other hand, have had manœuvres of some kind ever since the time of Frederick the Great, *i.e.* for a century and a half; and it is significant that during the twenty-two years, 1821–43, in which no large bodies of cavalry were assembled for manœuvres in that country, there was a tendency to eliminate warlike exercises, and substitute parade movements for them. Until recently our regiments had not got beyond parade movements. I hope, however, that the British public is beginning to recognize the necessity for annual manœuvres; and, satisfied, as I am, that there is an increasing desire for improvement amongst the officers, I believe in the future of our cavalry.

EVELYN WOOD.

1st January, 1897.

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No. I.

VILLERS-EN-CAUCHIES,

24th April, 1794.

ACHIEVEMENTS OF CAVALRY.

No. I.

VILLERS-EN-CAUCHIES, *24th April*, 1794.

Four Squadrons (two Austrian, two English) coming on an enemy in position, attack and disperse 3000 * men, capturing three guns.

In July, 1792, while both the Republicans and Girondists were arranging to dethrone Louis XVI., the Duke of Brunswick, who was perhaps the ablest of the commanders of the Allies, by his celebrated manifesto fomented a state of feeling in France which resulted in that country being at war, with some portion of Europe, for the next twenty years. In this document he warned the Assembly that if they did not forthwith liberate the king, and return to their allegiance, they should be held personally responsible, and answerable with their heads; and, moreover, he proceeded to threaten that if the Royal Family were insulted, Paris would be totally destroyed. The

* The enemy's strength near Villers-en-Cauchies is variously computed from 5000 to 10,000 men. The battalions in the early wars of the French Revolution numbered usually 450 of all ranks. I have therefore estimated those actually attacked as 450 (men) × 6 battalions − 5 per centum casualties = 2500 + 500 cavalry and artillery = approximately 3000.

Republicans, on the 19th November, virtually challenged all the neighbouring Powers, by passing the famous resolution that "they would grant aid and succour to every people disposed to recover their liberty." This was taken, as it was intended, as a declaration of war against all monarchial governments.

The Achievement noted above was, indeed, an astounding feat; but the state of the French armies a hundred years ago goes far to explain the success of the Austrian and English troopers. No student of history will attribute want of courage to the French troops, and least of all will an Englishman do so if he has read the accounts of the long struggle in the Peninsula between the two now friendly nations, which lasted from 1808 to 1814. Our adversaries showed us then that they could not only behave as generously, but also act as bravely as the best of our own troops.

De Lamartine, writing of his country's soldiers in the early days of the Revolution, thus portrays their condition at that period: "Anarchy had supplanted honour in the army. Patriotism did not yet exist. Order and honour are essential for soldiers, and though anarchy does not necessarily destroy a nation, yet no army can be kept together without discipline." *

Since the outbreak of the Revolution, in 1789, the bonds which bind soldiers together had in France been daily relaxed more and more. The Jacobins and Girondists, who were struggling for the mastery in France, agreed but in little; yet both parties realized that the army, as then existing, even after many Royalist officers had been dismissed or had

* "Histoire des Girondists," par Mon. A. de Lamartine.

emigrated, was likely to prove an obstacle to schemes for the subversion of monarchial, or constitutional government. The factions, therefore, not content with attacks on Religion, and on much of what was best in civil life, lost no opportunity of fomenting ill-feeling between officers and the Rank and File of the army. These attempts soon bore fruit, and at the end of 1791 the garrison of Perpignan, revolting, attacked successfully, and made prisoners, some fifty officers who had taken refuge in the citadel. The revolutionary parties thus attained their object, but their success in destroying discipline soon brought disgrace on the French troops.

Just two years before the action which affords this fine example of a cavalry achievement, while the Girondists were stirring up the Parisians against the king, Louis XVI., the results of indiscipline were plainly shown in the army stationed in the North of France. On the 28th April, 1792, the French moved from their Northern frontier in four columns, intending to concentrate at Brussels.

General Biron (Duc de Lauzan), an aristocrat who had identified himself thoroughly with the Republican movement, was personally beloved by his soldiers, which renders their conduct the more disgraceful. He had been encamped with 10,000 men at Quievrain, and had marched against the Austrian general (Beaulieu), who, with a small force, occupied some rising ground near Mons. Two regiments of cavalry forming Biron's advanced guard, on sighting Beaulieu's troops, were seized with a panic, and fled, crying, "Treachery!" Biron and his Staff made every effort to arrest the panic, but the soldiers ran over his body,

firing at him. The fugitives pillaged the military chest, and even robbed their chief of his private property as they fled unpursued.

While this was going on near Mons, similar scenes were occurring near Lille. General Dillon, having left the city with 3000 men, had marched on Tournay. As he approached that place some 900 of the enemy appeared. On seeing them, Dillon's cavalry, shouting

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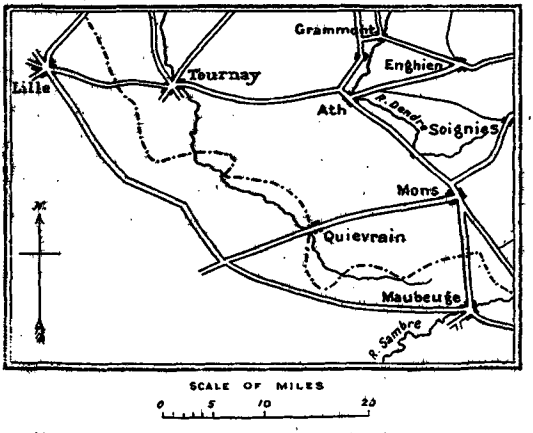


THE NORTH-EAST FRONTIER OF FRANCE IN 1794.

"Treason!" fled to Lille, and, although they were not pursued, abandoned guns, baggage, and transport. Dillon followed his troops back to Lille, and together with his Staff officer, was assassinated by them in the streets of the city, the soldiers afterwards dishonouring the two bodies.

The generals had therefore ample cause to fear their own men; while their superiors, administering

the government, sometimes visited failure to achieve success with the penalty of death. Thus the Convention, in August, 1793, executed General Custine, who was commanding the army in Flanders, when Valenciennes was captured by the British troops; and soon afterwards General Houchard, who had denounced his unfortunate superior officer, followed him to the guillotine. By this time the "Committee of Public Salvation" had overthrown the monarchial form of government, and had rendered the position of the officers of the army and navy so difficult, that they were in more danger from those nominally under their command than from the enemies of the Republic. The result of this insensate conduct of the Government was, as regards the efficiency of the troops, deplorable. St. Just, in his report to the "Committee," wrote, on the 10th October, 1793: "The administration of the armies is over-run by brigands. . . . They sell the rations of the horses. . . . The 'Commissioners' of the army have become the worst of monopolists."

It was not only the administration that had fallen to pieces, but discipline, thoroughly undermined, had almost ceased to exist. Citizen David, who accompanied General Pichegru in the 1794 campaign, tells the following story:—*

"A soldier, serving in the brigade commanded by Colonel Valetau, was placed in arrest for having left his garrison, without permission, to make some political speeches. The soldier wrote to General Souham, who commanded the district, demanding that Valetau should be dismissed as an aristocrat, and suggested himself as the colonel's successor. General

* "Pichegru Campaign," by Citizen David, published in 1796.

Souham answered the soldier to the effect that 'the complaint savoured rather of passion and revenge than of true patriotism.' The soldier then addressed the Administrators at Lille, but getting no satisfaction, denounced Colonel Valetau to the 'Committee of Public Safety' in Paris, and an order was promptly sent to dismiss the colonel from his command"!!

Now, under such circumstances, even the best officers could not have effected much with trained troops, and about 50 per centum of the armies guarding the frontiers of France, numbering in all 780,000 of all ranks, had, in 1794, only a few months' service, 312,000 having been conscripted early in 1793. Moreover, the officers who had replaced the Royalists were drawn from the same class as filled the ranks, viz. peasants, and although they were brave, they had not yet acquired the confidence of those they attempted to lead. With such materials it is not surprising that the privates behaved badly, and that the generals hesitated to attack, feeling that a defeat would probably be followed by denunciations, which almost invariably led to the scaffold.

After the campaign of 1793 the Austrian army remained entrenched in the country lying between the rivers Scheldt and Sambre, with advanced posts at Orchies, Marchiennes, and Le Cateau, behind which the mass of the troops reposed in security.

The English troops went into winter quarters on the 15th September, 1793, in the neighbourhood of Ghent, near which place they remained till the 24th February, 1794. It was, no doubt, difficult, one hundred years ago, to move troops during the winter months, on account of the badness of the roads; but it is

interesting for those who remember how the Prussian armies remained actively employed throughout the winter of 1870-71, to notice that His Royal Highness the Duke of York, who was in command of the English troops in Flanders, spent the greater part of the winter in England, the troops during his absence being commanded by Lieutenant-general Sir William Erskine. When the Duke of York returned from London, he established his headquarters at Courtray, where he and the Duke of Coburg, after a conference, decided to open the campaign by besieging Landrecies.

The French had collected an army of about 35,000 men, called "the Division of the Centre," cantoned about Cambray. General Pichegru, who was in command, determined to forestall the movements of the Allies by attacking their posts on the Selle river.

I do not propose to enter into any details of the campaign outside those belonging to the action, which I shall now endeavour to describe.*

From the 22nd April the advanced posts of the Allies were harassed by three columns of the French, which moved Eastward, from Cambray and Bouchain. The attacks on the 22nd April resulted in the Hessians being driven back on Denain, seven miles North of Villers-en-Cauchies. At the same time a French corps, which had crossed the Scheldt, fell upon the advanced posts at Avesnes-le-Sec and Villers-en-Cauchies, forcing them to retire. The French then took possession of Haspres, Saulzoir, and Montrecourt, on the river Selle, whence they pushed small parties over the river Ecaillon, which flows four miles Eastward of Saulzoir.

* See map at end of chapter.

General Clairfait, an artillery officer who commanded the Austrian troops, hearing at Tournay of the French advance, marched rapidly on Denain to support the Hessians, while the Duke of York, learning that the Hessian outpost had been driven back across the Selle, ordered a reconnaissance of cavalry to be made under General Otto.

There are considerable discrepancies in the authorities consulted for this narrative as to the general operations, but there is no substantial difference in their accounts, so far as the incidents of the cavalry action are concerned, except that the number of French troops alleged to have been engaged at Villers-en-Cauchies, is given, in all accounts emanating from the side of the Allies, as much greater than it is in others. This arises, I believe, from the troops near Haspres being included, although they were not engaged in the fight.

The French had about 25,000 men on the line Cambray-Bouchain, when they advanced to compel a portion of the Allied armies—composed of Austrians, Dutch, and English—to raise the siege of Landrecies, a fortified town twenty miles East of Cambray. This section of the Allied armies was encamped to the Eastward of the river Selle, having outposts on the left, or Western bank.

On the 23rd April a reconnaissance was made by two squadrons of Austrian Hussars (Leopold regiment), and two squadrons of the 15th Light Dragoons,* starting from St. Hilaire, down the left bank of the river. The Austrian Hussars had 120, all ranks, in a squadron. The two squadrons of the 15th

* In 1806 they were made Hussars and ordered to grow hair on the upper lip.

Light Dragoons, commanded by Major W. Aylett, numbered 7 officers and 180 all other ranks. When, on the 23rd April, it became known that the Republican troops were in force near Villers-en-Cauchies, reinforcements were demanded, and these were sent forward to support the reconnoitring detachment, which was intended to act on the 24th April as the advance-guard of a cavalry division. This consisted of the Royal Horse Guards (Blues), 1st Dragoon Guards, Royal Dragoons, 11th Light Dragoons, and two squadrons of the Zetchwitz Cuirassiers, but, as will be seen, the division arrived too late.

Description of the Ground.—The country about Villers-en-Cauchies is an undulating plain, the ground falling gradually from about one mile West of the village towards the Selle river. On the Eastern side of it the slope becomes more rapid, and shallow valleys run up from the river, the slopes of which, however, would nowhere compel a cavalry regiment to slacken its pace even in a rapid advance. There are neither hedges nor fences of any description, the boundaries of the fields being marked by small stones; and as the gentle undulations often obstruct the view at distances over half a mile, the slopes offer an ideal ground for cavalry, even in the present day of low-trajectory rifles.

On the morning of the 24th April the following was the situation: The Hessian outposts had been driven over the Selle the previous day by the Republican troops, who held the river-line from Houssy on their right to Haspres on their left. Three columns were advancing in an Easterly direction: one from Hardoing on Novelle, a second from Jouz by Avesnes-le-Sec on Haspres, and the third from Cambray on Saulzoir.

The Duke of York, who was in command of the section of the Allied armies, was anxious to drive the enemy back, not only to prevent interruption of the siege of Landrecies, but also because it was feared the foe might intercept the Emperor of Germany, who was then on his way from Brussels to join the Allied armies.

The reconnoitring detachment acting as advanced guard of the cavalry division, commanded by Colonel Baron Sentheresky, and guided by Captain Mecsery of the Archduke Ferdinand's Hussars, who was thoroughly acquainted with the ground, moved off early in the morning, before connection with the main body of the cavalry division had been established. The four squadrons came, about 7 a.m., on the enemy in an extensive wood of low trees near Montrecourt.* These troops, though in superior force,† retired from the wood towards the main body, at first in great haste, but formed up again in the open at 400 yards' distance; then, covered by skirmishers, they retired, this time steadily, reforming in front of a large body of troops of all Arms, which was in position between Villers-en-Cauchies and Avesnes. There was now some hesitation, as the Allied squadrons saw that the main body of their division was not in sight; and they realized the enormous odds with which they had to deal. The officers, however, pointed out to their men that they had advanced too far to be able to retreat with security, and that victory was essential for the safety of the Emperor. It was agreed an attack should be made. The

* This village now joins Saulzoir.

† In General Otto's report, estimated as 300 Dragoons and 400 or 500 Hussars.

Austrian and English squadron leaders having first sworn on crossed swords to *ride home*, which agreement the men ratified by their cheers, the order to advance was given. It was decided that the two squadrons of the 15th Light Dragoons should attack straight to the front, while the Imperial Hussars were to move somewhat to their right, and fall on the left flank of the enemy's cavalry.

Major Aylett's squadrons advanced at the trot, breaking into a gallop when 150 yards from the hostile cavalry. It did not await the shock, but retired at speed when the Allied line was 60 yards distant, wheeling outwards to uncover a battery of artillery. The guns opened fire before their front was clear, and with more effect on the retiring troops than on the English squadrons. Behind the artillery stood an oblong-shaped square of infantry, formed of six battalions, with the front ranks kneeling. In the rear of the square were more horsemen, on which the retreating squadrons re-formed. The French square now fired one volley, and the Allies, being pounded by artillery from both flanks, hesitated. This hesitation was, however, but momentary, for presently, encouraged, and led on by their officers, the squadrons dashed into the square, Major Aylett being bayoneted through the body as he entered it, and three other officers having their horses wounded.

Half the square now dispersed; the other half fired another volley, and remained firm until the Light Dragoons turned on them, when the whole mass broke up. The French cavalry fled before the Hussars, abandoning the infantry, which was pursued for half a mile, the fugitives being cut down in all directions. It had been recently ordered by the

National Convention of France that no quarter was to be given to the English; the Allied squadrons on this account, therefore, and also because their small numbers rendered it impossible to furnish an escort, took no prisoners, and throughout the day but few unwounded men were taken alive. The cavalry seized four cannon, three of which were sent to the rear, but for the fourth there was no means of transport, and it was eventually carried off by the French.

While the Austrian squadrons were pursuing the fugitives from the broken square, the 15th Light Dragoons, now commanded by Captain Pocklington, passed rapidly on towards the Bouchain road, dispersing a long line of fifty guns, and ammunition waggons, which were retiring on the Villers-en-Cauchies-Bouchain road. Some of these guns would have been retained by the captors if the advanced guard had been properly supported. The pursuit was continued for six miles till the English squadrons were fired on from the guns of the fortress of Bouchain, and a relieving force coming out, the "Rally" was sounded, and the British squadrons having re-formed, retired at a steady trot. On either side of them were hostile forces, who, however, mistook them for their own troops. An officer approaching to give them orders was killed, and the retreat was continued. When they approached Villers-en-Cauchies, the enemy's infantry was observed to have taken up a position on the high road, where it was carried by a causeway across a valley.* The 15th Light Dragoons now saw on the Southern side of the village the main body of the cavalry division, and having first

* The ground has apparently been sloped away since the conflict, as, although the place is easily recognized, the valley is now passable everywhere.

of all "changed front to the rear" to threaten the troops which were following them up from Bouchain, they then, again reversing their front, galloped through the infantry under a fire of cannon and muskets, which, although heavy, occasioned them but little loss.

The French left 800 dead on the field between Saulzoir and Villers-en-Cauchies, and carried off in waggons from 300 to 400 wounded. General Pichegru, the commander of the Republican army, afterwards had several of his artillery drivers shot for their conduct when attacked by the 15th Light Dragoons.

If the cavalry division had not mistaken its road, and had followed the advanced guard at proper supporting distance, a large number of guns would have been taken, and with but little loss to the Allies.

The ultimate effect of this charge was great. While it was being executed another French force was being repulsed at Troisville, fifteen miles further South, and in consequence of these defeats such a panic ensued that all the French columns retired, and with a loss of 4,000 men and 35 guns. The French cavalry covered the retirement, the infantry not being seen again. The English cavalry division bivouaced at Fontaine.

The losses of the Austrians were: Killed, 4 Rank and File, 7 horses; wounded, 6 Rank and File, 4 horses; missing, 10 men, 11 horses. The 15th Light Dragoons' losses were: Killed, 18 non-commissioned officers and privates, 19 horses; wounded, 13 all ranks, and 18 horses.

Colonel Sentheresky reported as follows:—"This remarkable * action of the two Light Dragoon

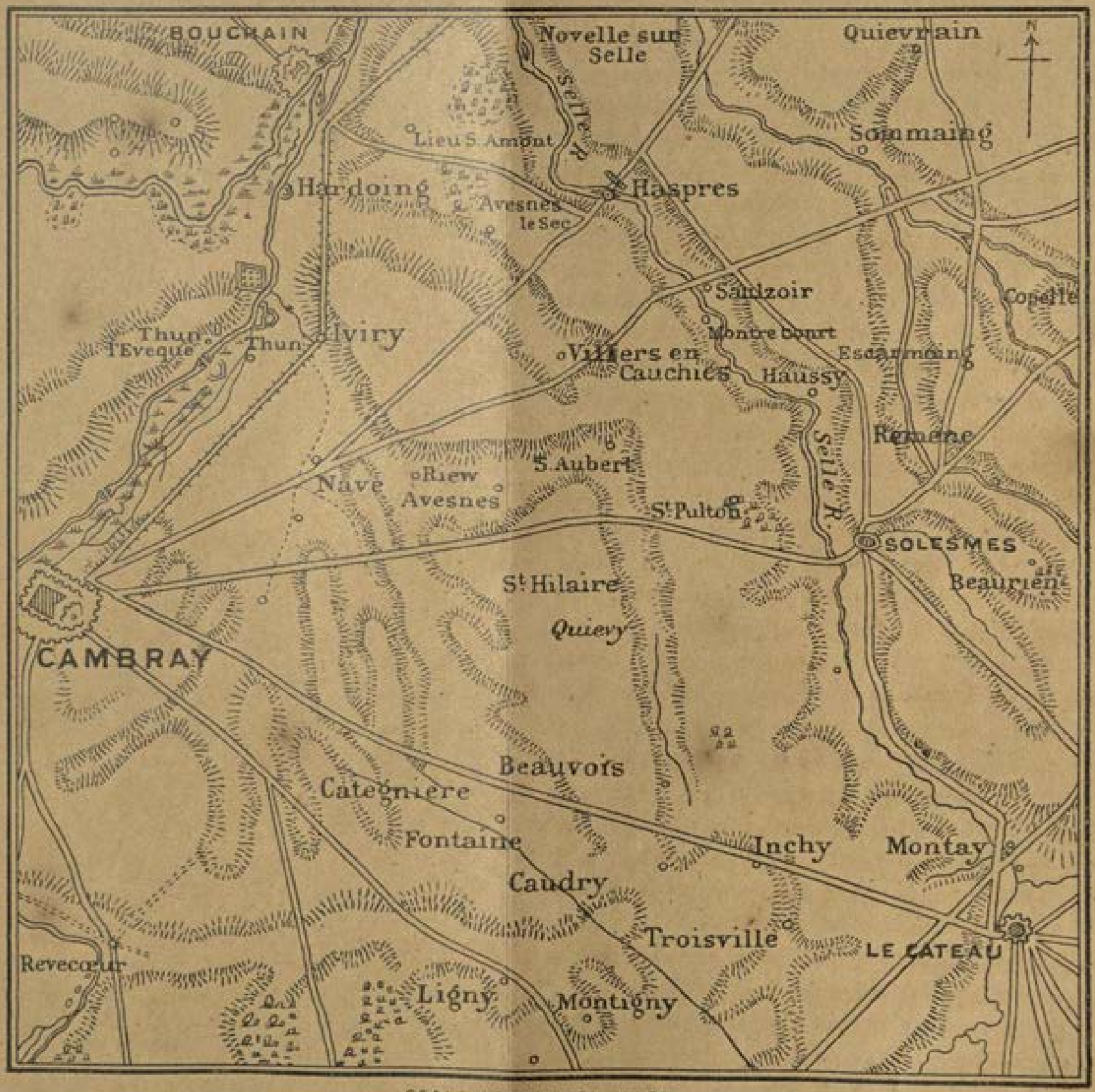
* Alison writes: "The British cavalry, led by the 15th Hussars, drove headlong through their whole line by a most brilliant charge, and completed their rout."

squadrons, encouraged by their brave officers, who, despising the greatness of the danger, and the multitude of the enemy, gave to this astonishing affair an essential decision." The Emperor had a gold medal struck for the officers, and bestowed on them also the Order of Maria Theresa, carrying with it the rank of Baron of the Empire.

Comments.—This victory was gained by the determined resolution of a small body of horsemen, and is a fine example of what may be effected by brave, well-mounted, and well-trained cavalry under favourable conditions, when the leaders are not only resolute but are also skilful. The French infantry were armed with an indifferent musket, which could only be reloaded slowly. The men were apparently raw levies, and must have been bad shots, as the Allied loss was small, although the fighting was mainly hand to hand. The formation of the infantry in one large body was very unfavourable for defence.

The French cavalry distinguished itself about the same time in another part of the scene of action, and we must therefore ascribe its want of resolution, when attacked by the 15th Light Dragoons, to the faulty leading of the officers. Its success in the other instance was the more creditable because the horses were poor, undersized, and of a coarse breed. But in the action I have described, the first position taken up, immediately in front of the artillery and infantry, indicates a want of knowledge on the commander's part; and no cavalry can be expected to fight if it is retired at speed with an enemy at its heels.

No. II.



THE COUNTRY NEAR VILLERS-EN-CAUCHIES,

TO ILLUSTRATE THE ACTION FOUGHT APRIL 24TH, 1794.

[To face p. 16.

No. II.

MARENGO,

14th June, 1800.

No. II.

MARENGO, 14*th June*, 1800.

Five squadrons, by charging opportunely, capture 2000 prisoners and the general in command, and convert an impending defeat into a glorious victory.

BONAPARTE'S march across the Alps and the results of the subsequent battle of Marengo startled Europe, and raised him at one bound to a level with the greatest captains of all time, for although writers have since criticized his strategy unfavourably, yet for the moment victory obliterated all errors.*

This narrative, intended to show the effect produced by a few squadrons in determining the result of a long day's fighting, will not permit of more than a brief reference to the other operations of one of the most interesting campaigns a soldier can read.

Those who wish to study the combinations, various engagements, and incidents which followed each other with the rapidity of the change of scenes in a pantomime, cannot do better than read "Adams's Great Campaigns," edited by Colonel Cooper King. Those interested mainly in strategy should peruse "Hamley's Operations of War." Those who wish to enjoy a

* "Un général victorieux n'a point fait des fautes aux yeux du public" (Voltaire, *Hist. Gén.*).

picturesque description should read Alison's great work (vol. v.): while those who enjoy sketches of personal character are invited to take up any of the numerous memoirs quoted by Alison, or, better still, the biography of Kellerman, in General Thoumars' "Grands Cavaliers du Premier Empire," published in 1890.

The careers of Napoleon and his principal generals are well known, not only to soldiers, but probably to most of those who are likely to read this story; so that, with the exception of Kellerman, I make no reference to them beyond contrasting their ages with those of their opponents, and this I do because there can be no doubt that bodily vigour and ability to support fatigue were important factors in the long-drawn-out battle, which lasted over fourteen hours.

For the sake of my civilian readers, and those soldiers who are not conversant with the military events at the end of the last century, it is desirable that I should describe, briefly, the condition of the opposing armies, and the strategical positions they occupied prior to the opening of the campaign.

During the previous year, although the fortune of war had been decidedly in favour of the Allies, yet Masséna, after his victory at Zurich, having turned on Suwarrow, caused both him and Korsakow to retire from Switzerland. Nevertheless, the only condition decidedly in favour of the French at the opening of the campaign was the escape of Napoleon from the isolated army in Egypt, where, however, the most efficient French battalions were still locked up. In France there was much discontent, and in La Vendée organized resistance to the authority of the Republic had not as yet been abandoned.

The French army, depleted by seven years of war, discouraged by many defeats, irregularly paid, insufficiently fed, and practically without uniform, was in a state bordering on mutiny, and the sufferings of the troops had induced many of them to desert. Masséna was now sent to command the army in Italy, but with no other means than money of re-establishing its efficiency. This, however, enabled him to pay his troops, and by his strength of character he soon restored order and discipline amongst the suffering soldiery. The task assigned to him was, nevertheless, one of extreme difficulty. He had about 30,000 men, and with these was required to hold a front extending for nearly one hundred miles, from Genoa on the East, to Nice on the West. He realized that any strong effort made by his adversary must infallibly force this attenuated line, and while he was faced by a numerous army, the English fleet closely watched the coast behind him. Early in the year 1800 A.D. a British expedition was being prepared in the Balearic Isles, which it was proposed should land to the Westward of Nice, in Provence, and thus take the French position on the Var river in rear.

Let us turn for a moment now to the Austrians. Towards the close of 1799 General Baron Melas had obtained some successes on the extreme left, or Western flank, and knowing the weakness of the French opposing troops, he seized the passes of the Apennines with advanced posts, and thus was enabled to canton his army in the fertile districts it occupied throughout the winter. That army, trained to a system of shock tactics which had been initiated by Suwarrow, was eagerly awaiting orders to move

forward, and confidently anticipated that the French would be overwhelmed.

Napoleon's first idea of the campaign had been to act offensively against the Austrians in Southern Germany, with Moreau's command, and to reinforce him with the army then being collected at Dijon. The First Consul had obtained a decree for 100,000 conscripts, who, though not of any immediate value for field service, set free a number of old soldiers at the depôts, and these were assembled, being termed the Army of Reserve. It was only when Moreau objected to Napoleon's strategical plans that the First Consul determined to throw the Army of Reserve across the Alps, and lead it himself into the plains of Northern Italy, striking at the back of the Austrian army, as he had originally intended that Moreau should act in rear of General Kray in Suabia. The First Consul now arranged that Moreau should drive General Kray back towards Ulm, and then detach a portion of his force to Italy in aid of the Army of Reserve.

Bonaparte, by the 12th of May, had collected, near Geneva, 35,000 infantry, and 5000 cavalry, which he divided into four Corps, and on the 16th May the advanced guard, commanded by Lannes, commenced the ascent of the Great St. Bernard, over which the army passed, by dint of extraordinary exertions, in four days, the advanced guard reaching Ivrea about the 19th.

To return to the subject of the ages of the generals employed, Victor, the oldest of the French generals, was but thirty-four, and the average age of Napoleon, Lannes, Desaix and Kellerman, was thirty-two years. Kellerman, born August, 1770, was indeed not quite

thirty when he, at Marengo—to quote from "Lannes' Life"—"inspired by a happy and sudden resolve, threw himself on the Austrian column as it was in the act of delivering a charge." Entering as a sub-lieutenant in a Hussar regiment on the 1st May, 1791, he became a battalion commander in April, 1793. His father, the conqueror of Valmy, had just been acquitted of the charges brought against him by the "Convention," but the son was arrested in 1794 for expressing decided opinions on the manner in which his father had been treated. Young Kellerman escaped death by the guillotine, but only through the friendly offices of the Mayor of Metz, who advised him after his release to leave the district. To conceal himself from further persecution he enlisted in the ranks of the 1st Hussar regiment, which he quitted the following year to become aide-de-camp to his father, with the rank of lieutenant-colonel.

In March, 1797, he crossed the Piave river with one squadron, and on reaching the far bank, charged and overthrew a regiment. Four days later, at Tagliamento, when acting as a cavalry Staff officer, putting himself at the head of two cavalry regiments, he defeated several squadrons, and took five guns. During this action he received several sword-cuts on the head. His conduct procured for him the rank of brigadier-general, and this within six years of his first commission. At the end of 1798, when his command, consisting of an advanced guard of 3 squadrons, 2 guns and 2 battalions infantry, was attacked suddenly by 8000 Neapolitans near Nepi, 25 miles North of Rome, he utterly defeated them, killing 500, capturing 2000 prisoners, 15 guns, and all the enemy's baggage. Soon afterwards, at Toscanella, near Civita

Vecchia, he fell on the rear-guard of a division of 7000 men, compelled the commander, a French refugee, to capitulate, and only allowed him to embark on condition of his giving up all his cannon.

Kellerman possessed in a remarkable degree the three main characteristics of a perfect cavalry leader:—

(*a*) His courage was indomitable;

(*b*) He had that quickness of perception which enabled him to seize the exact moment for throwing his command on the enemy;

(*c*) He was able to inspire his troops, not only with his own determination, but with confidence in his leading.

This last characteristic is often wanting in even the most daring men.

In March, 1800, he was employed at the Base, in equipping, mounting, and training regiments formed on the depôt squadrons of the Corps serving in Egypt; and eventually he took command of a weak brigade of Heavy cavalry composed of the 2nd, 6th, and 20th regiments, with which he immortalized his name at Marengo. He was a small, slightly-built man, delicate in appearance, with an intelligent but not prepossessing face. Neither wounds nor reverses ever cooled his courage.

Haddick, the youngest of the Austrian generals, was only forty years of age; but being mortally wounded in the first assault on the Fontanone brook, near Alessandria, was unable to help his older comrades in the final struggle at the close of the day. Zach was fifty-four, O'Reilly sixty, Ott sixty-two, and Kaim and Melas were both seventy years of age.

The last-named officer had served in the Seven Years' War (1756–63). Although enfeebled by age, his courage was as staunch as ever, for in the battle of Novi, 14th August, 1799, he is mentioned as personally leading on troops up to the cannon's mouth like a battalion commander. But, as will be seen in the course of the narrative, his physical strength was not equal to the continuous exertions which his position demanded.

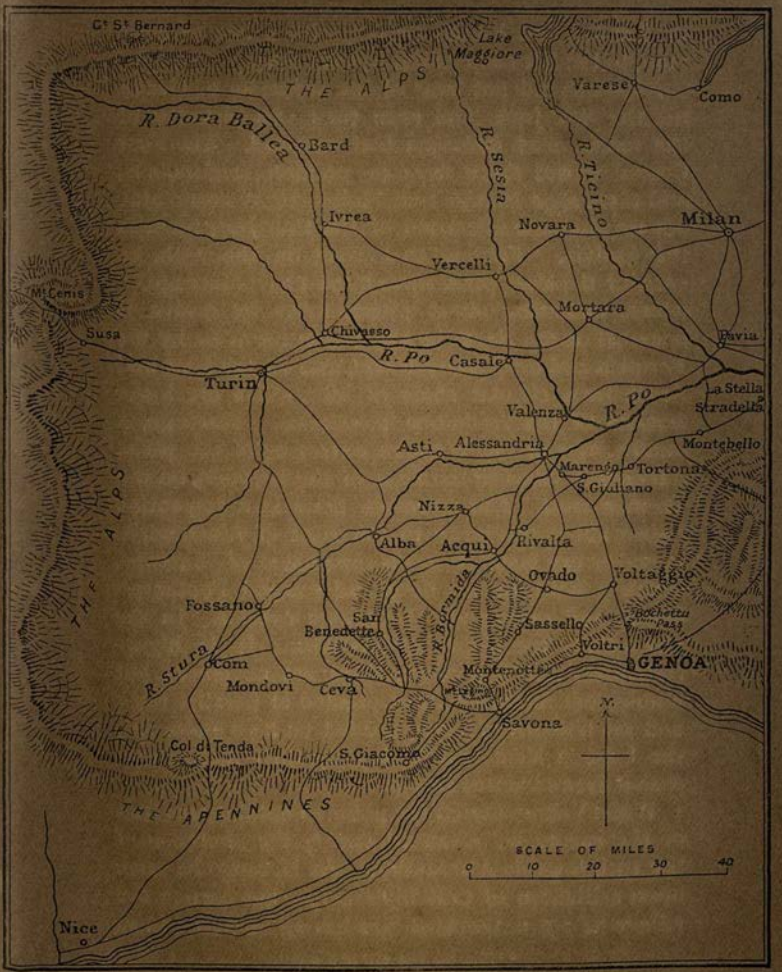
In the month of April, 1800, Melas, having left General Ott with 25,000 men to invest Genoa, which Masséna was defending with 12,000 men, turned on Suchet, who was holding a strong position on the Var river. It was not until the 19th May that the Austrian commander, at Nice, received reliable intelligence of the projected crossing of the Alps, when, leaving Elsnitz with 18,000 men before Suchet, he hurried off to Turin, where he arrived on the 27th May, the same day that Napoleon concentrated his troops at Ivrea. Melas did not, even then, know that Moncey's force was crossing the St. Gothard, and felt confident that Napoleon's immediate object must be the relief of Genoa. On the 31st May, when about to move Northwards with the intention of crossing the Po at Vercelli to fall on the rear of the French, the Austrian Commander-in-Chief learnt that his right flanking force under Wukassowich was falling back before Moncey, and at once sent orders for a concentration about Alessandria. Before Elsnitz received these instructions he had been heavily beaten, and driven back by Suchet, and eventually reached Alessandria with a loss of 10,000 out of his 18,000 veteran troops. Ott received his orders * to proceed to Alessandria

* Staff officers should note the serious omission in these orders.

(subsequently modified for Piacenza) on the 1st June, when he was negotiating with Masséna for the surrender of Genoa, which was evacuated on the 4th. Masséna did not surrender the fortress until he had lost two-thirds of his garrison, and a great part of the population had been literally starved to death.

In Genoa there were no private bakeries or butcheries, the establishments being worked by Government, and the destitution and misery while the siege lasted was terrible; bread and meat were only issued occasionally, and then in minute quantities. Such was the want of food that not a dog or cat remained alive, and rats fetched high prices in the market, while the bread, of which only a reduced ration was issued to the soldiers, was made mainly of unpalatable ingredients, and contained but very little flour. The pangs of hunger would have, on several occasions, caused the inhabitants to rise in revolt in order to surrender to the enemy, but that they were dominated by the artillery placed in battery in the thoroughfares by the orders of the stern general, Masséna.

While Elsnitz was moving on Alessandria, and Ott towards Piacenza, Napoleon was at Milan organizing a supply system for his army, and was placing his troops in positions to intercept Melas's retreat. It was uncertain by which bank of the Po he would retire, and Lannes, Victor, and Murat moved on Piacenza to block the Stradella defile, while two forces watched the higher Po, and another at Pavia prepared to defend the line of the Ticino. The converging movement of the opposing armies South of the Po soon brought them into collision, and on the 9th of June Ott, beaten at the battle of Montebello



CAMPAIGN OF 1800—ITALY.

by Lannes and Victor, retired, with a loss of 4000 men, to the left bank of the Scrivia river.

Napoleon did not hear of the surrender of Genoa till the 8th June, and even then was unaware of the terms which Masséna had obtained. The First Consul waited three days in position at Stradella, and then, apprehensive that Melas might evade him, advanced on the afternoon of the 12th June towards the Scrivia. Fording that river on the 13th, he entered the level plain since known as "Marengo," * which, extending about fifteen miles by twelve, is bounded on the North by the Po, on the West by the Bormida and the Tanaro rivers, and on the East and South by a circular chain of hills, which are lower features of the Apennine mountains. Marengo, a small village at the Western extremity of the plain, stands two miles to the East of the Bormida, on the Tortona road. The Bormida flows in a serpentine course about two miles to the East of Alessandria. It makes two bends towards the village of Marengo, which is built on the deep and scarped Fontanone brook, and commands the bridge over it. In the plain there are slight undulations. It is highly cultivated, like a garden; there are no fences, but numberless mulberry trees planted in parallel rows, and the festoons of vines, trained on high poles like the hops in Kent and Surrey, by their foliage concealed even mounted troops.

When Victor entered the plain, as nothing was seen of the enemy, he advanced during the afternoon of the 13th towards Alessandria. At Marengo he came upon a division of O'Reilly's corps, but carried the village at 5 p.m., the Austrians having received orders

* *Vide* map at end of chapter.

not to make an obstinate defence. A violent rain-storm interrupted the combat for some time, and then Victor followed up the retreating Austrians till he was stopped near the hamlet of Pedrabuona by the fire of artillery posted on the left bank of the Bormida.

This easy occupation of Marengo increased the First Consul's suspicion that the main Austrian army could not be in his front, and fearing that Melas might be retreating to the Southward towards Genoa, he himself turned back to the Eastward. The Scrivia, wide, with gravel bottom, carries but little water in the summer, but after heavy rain or sudden thaw of snow on the mountains, is frequently unfordable. Just then, it being in flood, Napoleon was obliged to remain on its left bank for the night, during the course of which he received information from Desaix, who had been detached towards Novi, which reassured him as to the movements of the enemy.*

At sunset on the evening of the 13th June, 30,000 Frenchmen, or just half of the First Consul's troops, then in Italy, were scattered between Susa, Ivrea, Arona, Pavia, Milan, Brescia, and Cremona, at distances varying from fifty to a hundred miles from the battlefield. Victor was at Marengo, Lannes a short distance in his right rear; Murat on the Scrivia, Rivaud's cavalry brigade at Sale, and Desaix near Rivalta; Masséna, with the remnants of the troops freed by his capitulation, was near Savona, and Suchet was approaching Acqui. During the night Napoleon sent orders from Garofolo, to recall Desaix from Rivalta, and to bring up Murat and Monnier

* Squadron officers should notice how this shows the importance of reconnoitrers reporting even negative information.

from the lower Scrivia. No orders were sent to Rivaud. Meanwhile Victor's soldiers, throughout the still summer night, heard the unmistakable noise of a large force "standing to arms" in a confined space.

The Austrian general had 25,000 men absent in detachments, but had collected 31,000 men and 100 guns, to attack Victor and Lannes, who with 18,000 men and 40 guns were bivouaced on the plain. Melas's plan was to cross the Bormida at daybreak, and after detaching Ott with 8000 men to Castel-ceriolo, to move himself with 20,000 men on the Marengo-San Giulano road. O'Reilly, who with 3600 men had bivouaced overnight on the right bank of the Bormida, was to move up it as far as La Stortigliona, and then endeavour to turn the French left.

Next morning O'Reilly, attacking at 6 a.m., drove back the French advanced guard without difficulty, but his strict adherence to the original orders to move up stream, and the absence of supports, which were delayed in crossing the Bormida, saved the French from disaster thus early in the day. About eight o'clock, however, a serious attack was made on Marengo, which Victor had foreseen, and reported as early as 6 a.m.

At 8 a.m. Melas received information that an Austrian squadron had been driven out of Acqui, and, unnecessarily nervous—seeing that Acqui is twenty miles from Alessandria—of an attack in his rear, detached 17 squadrons numbering 2300 men in that direction.

Napoleon now reaped the advantage of Melas's mistake in having abandoned Marengo the previous evening. It took the Austrian General, Haddick, two hours to deploy the leading division, and another

hour passed ere Kaim's division could be brought up into second line. Although the Austrians had an overwhelming force of artillery, yet the bends of the river were greatly to the advantage of the French artillery, enabling it to enfilade its opponents. Haddick's division lost heavily in attempting to cross the Fontanone brook, and he was mortally wounded in leading the attack; his men then retreated, but were soon replaced by Kaim's division, which, after suffering severely, also retired. Shortly before its retreat General Pilatti had sent some squadrons (which were obliged to move in single file) across the brook above Marengo. At twelve o'clock they were about to attack the left flank of the French infantry lining the brook, when Kellerman approached with his brigade, consisting of—

2nd	Cavalry	Regiment	.	strength,	182 sabres
6th	„	„	.	„	340 „
20th	„	„	.	„	280 „
		Total	.	.	802 „ *

He had bivouaced near Marengo overnight, and at 9 a.m. had taken up his position South of the village near the 8th Dragoons (328 sabres), which regiment acted under his orders during the day. Kellerman, divining Pilatti's intention, sent the Dragoons to attack the Austrian squadrons before they had completed their formation, and advanced his own brigade in support. The 8th Dragoons overthrew the leading squadrons of the enemy, but, being charged by the Supports, were overwhelmed. Kellerman, ordering

* My numbers differ from those quoted in "Adams" and "Alison," but are taken from the despatches written the day after the battle by Kellerman, and Victor.

the Dragoons to rally behind him, then advanced, and breaking into the charge when within fifty yards of the Austrian line, drove it back to the brook. The French took 100 horses and then retired to their original position, where, however, they lost many men from the fire of the Austrian artillery.

Ott, whose march towards Castel-ceriolo had been delayed until the road was clear of Kaim's division, was on arriving there opposed only by a weak force of cavalry. If he could have marched earlier, Victor and Lannes must have been overwhelmed. For two hours Victor had repulsed all attacks on him, and when Lannes came up on the right rear, the battle was continued under more even conditions. The opposing forces were drawn up within point-blank range, and many fell, the soldiers on both sides closing resolutely to their centre to fill up the gaps. After many fruitless attacks the Austrians eventually carried the Fontanone stream, and having thrown a trestle bridge across it, the Supports, aided by batteries concentrating their fire on the village, drove Victor back in great disorder on the San Giulano road. Simultaneously O'Reilly, having seized La Stortigliona, advanced, by La Bolla, on the Tortona road. As the Duc de Rovigo (Savary) writes: "Had the Austrian cavalry now charged Victor in his retreat, he must have been crushed."

Kellerman, however, never gave them an opportunity. He knew that Victor's men had no more ammunition, and he covered their retreat, retiring his squadrons by alternate troops, and menacing, with determination, the enemy from time to time, prevented them from taking a single prisoner.

Lannes, whose left was completely uncovered by

Victor's retreat, now fell back, moving at first steadily in echelons of squares. The Austrians, preceded by fifteen guns, followed in pursuit, halting from time to time to fire, and at last the French could no longer stand up under their heavy losses, and the squares breaking, the plain was covered with fugitives shouting, "Every man for himself!" They rallied, however, at San Giulano in rear of some squares which still held together, encouraged by the sight of Napoleon, who had arrived with the Consular Guard. This latter Corps was detached to the North-westward to oppose Ott, who was now advancing from Castel-ceriolo. The Infantry of the Consular Guard, about 900 strong, forced its way forward, through the crowd of fugitives and the enemy, to within half a mile of Castel-ceriolo, but at last, shaken by the Austrian artillery and charged in front by infantry and in flank and rear by cavalry, it gave way and fled in disorder to Li Poggi. At this time, Monnier, moving up to the front, detached St. Cyr's brigade Northwards, which seized Castel-ceriolo and, although cut off from the rest of the French army, held it for the rest of the day. During the retreat from the Northern flank of the field, the 72nd regiment of Monnier's division when retiring in line was at one time completely surrounded by a large force of cavalry, and was charged simultaneously in front and in rear, but the third rank facing about, while the two front ranks stood firm, the regiment beat off the cavalry, and retired without being broken.

About 2 p.m. Melas, who had been twice slightly wounded, two horses having been killed under him, called Zach, his Chief of the Staff, and desired him to assume the command, and press the retreat of the

French troops, saying, "I am quite worn out, for I have been in the saddle since midnight, and must go back to Alessandria, and rest."

Some time elapsed before the Austrian battalions could be collected, and eventually Zach allowed them to move on without being properly reformed. Major-general Le Baron de Crossart, a French refugee Royalist who was serving with the Austrians, urged Zach to re-establish order ere he went forward, but he was told not to make himself a bore, and the column advanced with bands playing, and without any precautions, along the high-road, many soldiers quitting the ranks to despoil the dead, and officers leaving their companies to join in general congratulations. The advanced guard, Wallis's brigade, deployed into two lines after passing Cassina Grossa, the left flank being covered by Lichtenstein's cavalry. Nine battalions with twelve squadrons on the left flank followed in column of route at distances of half a mile. On the left rear there was a cavalry Corps of 2,000 sabres. Ott moved parallel to Zach's column, but two miles farther to the Northward.

We will now turn to the French side of the battle-field.

Desaix, who, early in the morning, on hearing the guns had halted in anticipation of his recall, shortly before four o'clock, preceding his division by half an hour, rode up to San Giulano, where he was met by Napoleon and informed by him of the events of the day. There is a striking difference in the relations of the First Consul with his brother generals in 1800, and their respectful subordination after he had become Emperor. Said he, "Desaix, what do

you think?" "Think!" replied the young general. "Why, that the battle is completely lost, but it is only four o'clock, and there is time to win another. To win, however, we must use artillery before we attack. To forego its use will cause for us another defeat."

Desaix placed his infantry near San Giulano, where Marmont prepared a battery of eighteen guns (all that the French had left), ten being taken from the Reserve, and eight from Desaix' division. These unlimbered on the right of the Giulano-Alessandria road, and occupied half the frontage, the infantry being greatly reduced in effectives. Meanwhile Napoleon rode along the front of the troops, encouraging them to make another effort. Desaix' division was formed in two lines West of San Giulano, concealed from the advancing Austrians by a slight rise in the ground. The 9th Light Infantry regiment had one battalion in line (three deep), with a battalion on either flank in quarter-column. It held the edge of a vineyard, some of Marmont's guns being in the intervals. To the North of Desaix stood Lannes, and to Lannes' right front was the Consular Guard, and Monnier's division. The remnants of Victor's division took post in the left rear of Desaix, while Kellerman formed up 200 yards to the right rear of Desaix' right brigade. Kellerman's own brigade, the 2nd, 6th, and 20th regiments, having been under fire many hours, at this time numbered only 156 sabres, but he had also under his orders two squadrons of the 8th Dragoons, and a troop (quarter of a squadron) of the 1st Dragoons, about 250 sabres strong—making a total of 400 sabres. They had charged many times during the day, generally

when covering the retreat, but invariably with success. The French were in this position when, at five p.m., the leading Austrian brigade, without scouts and with bands playing, approached, all unconscious of danger till Marmont's guns opened on them with canister-shot. Wallis's men, startled by this unexpected resistance and fearing an ambuscade, fell back, but the next brigade (Latterman's Grenadiers), encouraged by General Zach, stood firm, and a heavy fire was kept up for twenty minutes, when Desaix ordered the 9th Light Infantry to advance. As they moved forward Desaix fell dead, struck in the back by an accidental shot from one of his own men, the bullet passing through the heart. He had recently joined from Egypt, having landed at Toulon on the 4th May, after a voyage of two months from Alexandria. He had only been in command two days, and both aides-de-camps being away at the moment, his fall was unnoticed till a sergeant asked an officer if he might appropriate the dead man's coat.

The advance of the infantry left some of the guns behind, and Marmont in trying to get two of them and a howitzer forward near the high road, was just limbering up, when he saw through the clouds of smoke and dust a French battalion breaking up, followed by a heavy column of the enemy, into which he poured four rounds of canister, just as Kellerman passed by the right front of the guns. He also had noticed the French battalion waver, and had advanced to avert the impending disaster. At the very minute that the Austrians, having fired a last volley, broke into the double to attack the French infantry, Kellerman, who was advancing in column

of troops, gave the word, "Left wheel into line—Charge." At the moment of impact the 2nd and 20th regiments were in front, and though the formation into line was necessarily effected somewhat in succession, yet, the dragoons falling with vigour on the flank of the Austrians, whose muskets were empty, the effect of their charge was such that 2000 men with General Zach threw down their arms and surrendered as prisoners, with six stand of Colours and four guns.

Kellerman, rallying 200 sabres, now led them against Lichtenstein's cavalry, which was advancing on Zach's left flank, but it fled, and this example was later followed by Pilatti's command, which had suffered heavy losses earlier in the day. Meanwhile Lannes' and Victor's men, encouraged by Kellerman's success, immediately advanced, and the Austrian cavalry, fleeing from Kellerman, rode over their own battalions, and finally the whole panic-stricken mass fled towards Marengo. Kellerman then collected 360 mounted Consular Guards, and with them and 200 men, the remnants of his brigade and the Dragoons, made another charge on the enemy's cavalry and dispersed it.

At Marengo, Weidenfeld and O'Reilly strove devotedly to give the fugitives time to escape by defending the Fontanone brook. The village was carried, however, by Lannes and Boudet at dusk, and the Austrians, retiring on Pedrabuona, where they were joined by Ott's division, were rallied by Melas, the general standing in the fighting line.

The losses sustained by the Austrians were 7000 killed and wounded, 300 officers (7 being generals), and 3000 men prisoners. The French losses in killed

and wounded were equally great. The 20th Cavalry regiment, which with the 6th headed the charge on the Austrian Grenadiers, lost seven out of eleven officers, but it took two out of the six Colours which were captured, and all four guns.

Next day Melas agreed to evacuate all the country West of the Chiese river, it being arranged that the valley of the Mincio should be considered as neutral ground.

Comments.—The slow advance of the Austrians after they had crushed Victor's and Lannes' divisions was possibly due to their having undergone much exertion on the previous days. I have been unable to trace what became of the 1900 sabres under General Nobili, but it is remarkable that when Ott was retreating after Zach's discomfiture, he was not informed by the cavalry that Castel-ceriolo was still held by the French. It seems probable that this negligence and the failure to crush Kellerman when he was imposing his will, by sheer audacity, on 2000 brave men, was due to want of unity of command.

Apart from the decisive charge, the French cavalry, throughout the long day's fighting, devoted themselves nobly to extricating their retreating infantry from the pursuing foe, and Champeaux, who commanded the Dragoon brigade covering Victor's right, was killed while leading it in a charge. Napoleon appears to have forgotten Rivaud's brigade of cavalry, which remained all the morning at Sale, some miles off, without receiving orders. While no writers question the striking effect of Kellerman's charge, some, and notably the Duc de Rovigo (Savary), ascribe to Napoleon the foresight of having ordered it. There

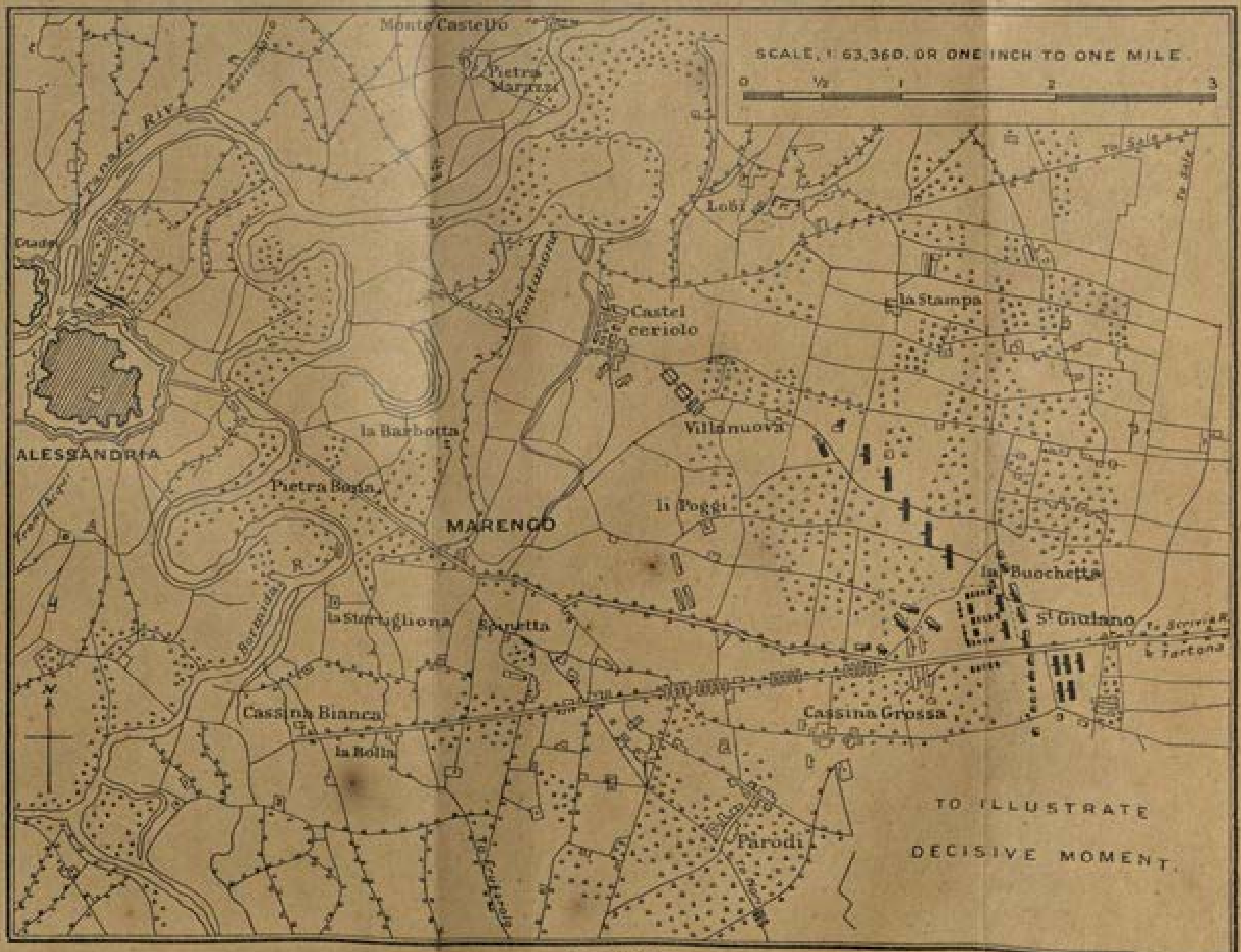
can be, however, no doubt that this is an error, for a study of the writings of those generals who were eye-witnesses of the event, prove it to be so—and, indeed, Napoleon himself, in his memoirs dictated to General Gourgaud at St. Helena, leaves no doubt on the subject.

La Duchesse d'Abrantes (Junot) gives a graphic account of the numerous occasions on which her guests —Bessières, Lannes, Eugène, Duroc, and Berthier— remained for hours at the dinner-table discussing the battle, using the candelabra, wine bottles and remnants of the dessert to mark the different positions, and she adds that all these generals, who were at that time devoted to Napoleon, ascribed the victory to Kellerman. General Dupont, three days after the battle, in a letter to Carnot, the War minister at Paris, wrote: "Kellerman's brilliant success gave the impulse to the whole army for a general advance."

I dwell on this point because it is important that cavalry officers should study when to strike in without asking for permission, or awaiting orders. The numbers in English cavalry regiments are small, but great results have often been achieved by small forces; and we have one incalculable advantage which no other nation possesses, *i.e.* that our officers are able to hunt, and than which, combined with study, there is, during peace, no better practice for acquiring the gift which Kellerman naturally possessed. Let us not forget that in the employment of cavalry on a battle-field the characteristics and skill of the leader are more important than either numbers or training, but the necessary aptitude is seldom found in man, and is always capable of improvement by study.

Kellerman was no doubt injudicious in his remarks after the action, but Napoleon might have forgiven even grosser impertinence on account of such great services. When the private secretary, Bourrienne, met his master at 7 p.m. on the battle-field, after expressing poignant regret for the loss of Desaix, Napoleon said, "That little Kellerman did very well! He charged home, and in the nick of time; we owe him a good turn." Nevertheless, two hours later, when Kellerman entered the room in which the generals were sitting at supper, which he had requisitioned from the neighbouring convent of Del Bosco, Napoleon said coldly, "You made rather a good charge to-day," and then turning to Bessières, whose command had only charged a beaten foe at dusk, observed, "The Guard covered itself with glory." Kellerman, irritated by this injustice, answered, "I am glad you are pleased, Consul, for this will put the crown on your head." Some few days later he repeated the substance of this expression in a letter to his comrade Lasalle, then in Paris, and this being opened in the post-office and shown to Napoleon, increased the Consul's dislike of the best cavalry officer of his time.

It is only just to add that when Kellerman's repeated misappropriations of money in Spain compelled Napoleon to recall him and place him on half-pay in 1811, and he, having obtained an interview, tried to justify his conduct, the Emperor, who knew all the facts, replied graciously: "General Kellerman, whenever your name is brought up before me, I can remember nothing but Marengo."



MARENGO,
14TH JUNE, 1800.

[To face p. 40.

No. III.

SOMO-SIERRA,

30th November, 1808.

No. III.

SOMO-SIERRA, 30*th November*, 1808.

A Light Cavalry regiment attacks directly in front an entrenched battery guarding a defile, routs its defenders, and captures 16 guns.

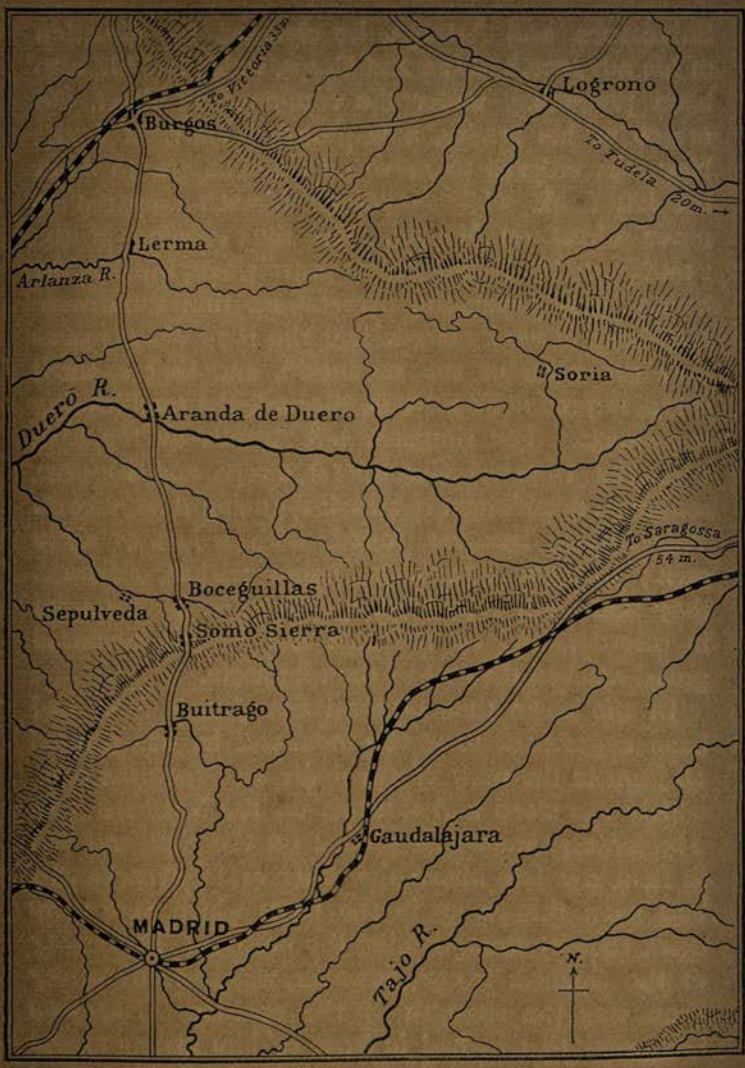
Fag an beaulach!—"Get off the road!" Such would be a brief but apt description of this apparently hopelessly desperate, but in the result brilliantly successful charge. There was no tactical skill displayed by the regimental officers, and no generalship on the part of the greatest soldier of the century, whose culpable impatience caused the death of many brave men. There is, however, one valuable lesson that soldiers may learn from it, *i.e.* the necessity of maintaining adequate distances between squadrons when attempting such a task.

The Emperor Napoleon having left Paris after the opening of the Legislative Session, and arriving at Bayonne on the 3rd November, 1808, immediately made his presence felt in the country. He reached Vittoria in the evening of the 8th November, where he was met by the Civil and Military heads of the town; but declining to occupy the house prepared for his reception, partly because he wished Joseph, the king, who had his headquarters in the town, should remain the principal personage in the

Peninsula, he entered the first small inn that he saw, and after hearing verbal reports of the situations of the French, Spanish, and English armies, as far as they were known, proceeded to study his plan of campaign, which he then dictated in the course of two hours.

We are only immediately concerned, at first, with the movements of the 2nd Corps, which, under the Duke of Dalmatia (Soult), was ordered to attack the Count de Belvedere, who was in position near Aranda del Duero, barring the road to Burgos, and later with that of Victor, and the Imperial Guards. The battle of Gaimonal, fought on the morning of the 10th November, ended in the instantaneous and complete defeat of the Spaniards, 2500 of whom were killed, while 20 guns and 900 men, with 6 stands of Colours, were taken on the field. Count Belvedere's men dispersed in all directions, he himself escaping to Lerma. All the ammunition and stores of the Spanish army in the North of Spain were captured. This battle, and that of Espinosa, fought on the same day by Marshal Victor, resulted, after a renewed action on the following day, in the retreat of the Spaniards under Count Romana. The subsequent operations of Marshal Soult subdued the whole of the North of Spain, and secured the coast-line from San Sebastian to the frontier of Asturias; while the decisive victory of Lannes at Tudela, on the 23rd November, ended in the flight of the Spaniards, under Palafox, to Saragossa.

Napoleon now detached three divisions of cavalry under Bessières, with 24 guns, to turn the flank of the British force under Sir John Moore, and ascertaining that the English had not come forward beyond



THE SOMO-SIERRA.

Salamanca and Astorga; he changed the direction of his advance, and the 2nd Corps, which had hitherto been preceding, under the command of Soult, the march of his armies, now guarded his right flank; Ney was ordered to move on Gaudalajara, to cover the left flank, while Napoleon himself prepared to move direct on Madrid. On the evening of the 21st November reconnoitring patrols, sent towards the Somo-Sierra mountain, ascertained that there were 6000 men at work entrenching the road which passes over the neck of the mountain, and that a small camp, formed at Sepulveda, blocked the road leading to Segovia. The Emperor left Aranda on the 28th with the Imperial Guard, 1st Corps, and Reserve, sending a detachment to attack the camp at Sepulveda. This attack, however, failed, with a loss of sixty men; but the Spaniards, panic-stricken, although they had been successful, quitting the post, retired in disorder, and on the 29th the French advanced guard reached the foot of the mountain.

In the mean time General San Juan's force had been augmented to 10,000 men, and he had planted 16 guns in the neck of the defile, to sweep the road, which was steep and difficult on the Northern side. The infantry were well placed on the right and left in tiers, one line above the other, and entrenchments had been thrown up in the parts which were more open, thereby strengthening the position. The quality of the Spanish troops, however, was less satisfactory than was the strength of the position. Napoleon imagined that he had in front of him merely armed bands of peasantry, augmented by the fugitives from Aranda; and no doubt some of these men were present, augmenting what was termed the Army Reserve, which

had not been engaged. On the other hand, this Reserve was badly armed, insufficiently fed, and with pay greatly in arrears. Enthusiasm, indeed, was not wanting, and the soldiers were proud of the recollection of their victory at Baylen, confidently believing that their position on the mountain was impregnable. Nevertheless, the men were without discipline, and under defeat passed rapidly from over-confidence to the wildest insubordination, for at Talavera, a month later, they murdered and mutilated their brave general, San Juan, whom they had shamefully abandoned on the 30th November in the action I am about to narrate.

The regiment of heroic Poles, whose feat I am about to describe, had been raised by Napoleon at Warsaw, and was composed of picked men. The 3ième Chevaux Legers was commanded by Count Krasinski as colonel commandant; but he being sick, though present in the field of action, the actual command was exercised by Lieut.-colonel Dautancourt. Both officers and men were capable of displaying extraordinary courage, but their leaders had neither theoretical nor practical knowledge of war.

On the 29th November, the regiment formed the advanced guard of the army, the 3rd squadron, under Captain Kozietulski, about 80 strong, being detailed as personal escort to the Emperor, who arrived at sundown at Boceguillas, a pretty little village about eleven miles from the pass through the Somo-Sierra range of mountains, up to which the ground rises steadily. When the escort squadron was relieved, by the Chasseurs and Grenadiers of the Guard, it went forward and drove in an outpost of Spaniards at Carajas, a small village at the entrance of the

defile. Here the third squadron remained, the others moving back to Boceguillas.

The Emperor passed a sleepless night. Doubtless his brain was overwrought; and, moreover, the best house in the village, which had been prepared for him, caught fire during the afternoon, and the smell of the burning embers, together with the intense cold, drove him out of his tent to the fires round the soldiers' bivouacs. It was, probably, this discomfort which caused him to get into the saddle too early, and move to the front before Victor's infantry advanced from the bivouac.

Description of the Defile.—The direct way from Burgos over the mountain to Madrid, passes through a gorge which is narrowed in by precipitous rocks on either side. Shortly after the road leaves Carajas, and some way up the gorge, an enormous rock stands on the West side, at the foot of the last ascent to the summit of the pass, which, though short, was very steep. On, and below the summit of the pass were 16 guns, covered by a field entrenchment of slight profile, and placed in batteries one above the other, while the roadway itself was closed by wooden palisades. The spurs running down from the neck on either side of the road were covered with crowds of Spaniards extended in skirmishing order, well concealed behind the rocks. Such was the position to be assaulted, and although very formidable, if Napoleon had been less impatient there was nothing to prevent its being carried under proper tactical arrangements. The Emperor, however, reached the height, on the East of which the village of Carajas stands, at 11 a.m., and while waiting for the troops, breakfasted. At that season of the year the mountain

is often covered with a thick mist till noon, when the rays of the sun are strong enough to disperse it, and up to 11 a.m. on the 30th November it was not possible to see a quarter of a mile to the front.

General Victor sent the 9th Light Infantry (which, as shown in Chapter II., seconded Kellerman's charge so successfully at Marengo, A.D. 1800) to the right, and the 24th regiment to the left, while on the roadway itself General Senarmont placed 6 guns, supported by the 85th regiment, with the Imperial Guard in reserve. Owing to the fog, and the delays incidental to moving over rough ground, the advance was very slow at first, and the Emperor, becoming impatient, mounted his horse, and rode into the mouth of the defile. A shower of bullets stopped his progress when still a quarter of a mile from the main line of the Spanish defence, and he urged his infantry to hurry forward on both flanks. To enable them to produce any effect by their fire, it was necessary to give time for the movement to be developed, but this was exactly what the Emperor would not allow, and he presently ordered the escort squadron to charge up the road. Seven officers and 80 of all other ranks accordingly galloped up the roadway as fast as their horses could carry them. With heads bent low, and in as close formation as they could ride, they pressed on, followed, without any intervening distance, by the other squadrons. Before any horsemen of the leading squadron actually reached the battery all seven officers were struck down, and less than twenty men remained in the saddle. Some of these, turning back, collided with the squadron behind, which in turn ran into the next squadron, and the whole becoming a surging mass, incapable of moving

forward, gradually retired behind the big rock which marked the sharp turn in the roadway. It may be well to state that the accounts of this charge, and of its eventual success, are most conflicting, for while most of the Polish officers who took part in the charge insist that there was no check, and that they carried the position straight away, yet the balance of independent testimony, and the official gazette, support the version of the account which I have adopted.

When the 3rd Polish Light cavalry galloped back down to the mouth of the ravine, the Chief of the Staff, Berthier, who thought highly of Montbrun's capacity, said to the Emperor, "There is Montbrun," and the Emperor, calling him, reprimanded him severely for his previous conduct, but ended the interview by putting the Poles under his command for the time. This distinguished officer was known and named in despatches in different campaigns as "the brave Montbrun," "the intrepid Montbrun," "the heroic Montbrun." Somewhat above the middle height, his face and figure were remarkably perfect in beauty, and he was endowed with unusual strength. Born in 1770, he entered the Army through the Ranks, and becoming a colonel at thirty years of age, was a brigadier at thirty-five, and from the year he entered as a private, in 1787, he had passed a service of eighteen years, fighting in every campaign in which the soldiers of France had been engaged in that period. Napoleon had a very high opinion of his courage and skill,* and had nominated

* The Emperor showed himself less generous to Montbrun in resenting insubordination, than he was in condoning the peculations of Kellerman. When the French army was advancing in Russia, the

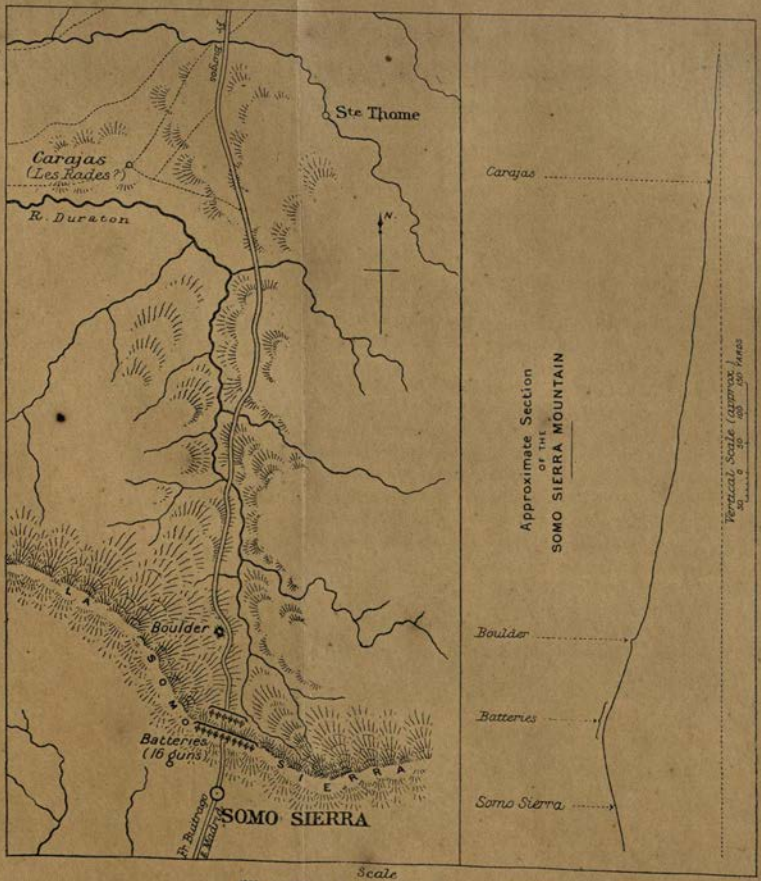
him to command a cavalry brigade ordered to Spain.

Montbrun, having obtained short leave of absence while his brigade was marching across France, went to Paris to see a young lady, whom he afterwards married. Mademoiselle du Morand was without a home, her father being in command of the troops in Corsica, and Montbrun arranged with his sister to go to Bayonne to meet the young lady there, and make a home for her. Montbrun's sister was delayed, and the general, unable to leave Mademoiselle du Morand alone, remained with her, and consequently missed being present at the battle near Burgos. The Emperor, who was furious with him, gave the command of his brigade to another officer, and proposed to try Montbrun by court-martial. He, in despair, was accompanying the Emperor's headquarters, to await the decision of his fate, when this opportunity occurred of retrieving his position. He made the most of it. Having reformed the regiment, he enjoined on each squadron leader that he must

Emperor gave special and succinct instructions to Montbrun to surprise Wilna, in order to secure the magazines of food. Napoleon had omitted to inform Murat, under whose orders Montbrun had been acting, and the prince, having demanded an explanation from Montbrun of his forward movement, was irritated by the Emperor's reticence, and refused to allow Montbrun to proceed. In the result the Russians destroyed the magazines before Murat arrived. When the Emperor came up, he abused Montbrun in most emphatic language for his failure, and absolutely declined to allow him to say a word in his defence. After Montbrun had in vain looked to Murat to explain the failure, irritated beyond control by the repeated abuse of the Emperor, he eventually drew his sword, and throwing it away over his head, galloped off to his camp, shouting, "Go to the devil, all of you!" The Emperor took no open notice of this insubordination, possibly because Murat, when alone with him, told the truth; but when Montbrun was killed on the 7th September, 1812, the death of this distinguished officer, who was doubtless the second-best cavalry general of the day, was thus announced in the official gazette: "The general of division, Count Montbrun, was killed by a cannon shot."

keep a distance equal to the depth of a squadron from that in front of him, and having then explained clearly his orders, he placed himself at the head of the regiment, and rode forward into the defile, determined to re-establish his reputation or to die. As the leading squadron galloped on many fell, but without hesitation the survivors pressed forward and gained the batteries. Montbrun himself, jumping off on the roadway, ran to the barricade of stakes, which he began to pull down under a shower of bullets. The leading files followed his example, and then remounting, they charged the Spaniards, the greater number of whom were sabred, the ground on the Southern side being favourable for pursuit. When the survivors of the regiment formed up, Napoleon, having caused the trumpets to sound a flourish, addressed the Poles, saying, "Soldiers, non-commissioned officers, and officers, you are indeed worthy to belong to my Old guard, for I regard you as the bravest of the brave."

While this was taking place the infantry were gaining the heights on the flanks, and the Emperor and his force reached Buitrago in the afternoon, and entered Madrid on the 4th December.



THE DEFILE OF THE SOMO SIERRA MOUNTAIN.
30TH NOVEMBER, 1808.

(To face p. 52.

No. IV.

GARCIA HERNANDEZ,

23rd July, 1812.

No. IV.

GARCIA HERNANDEZ, *23rd July*, 1812.

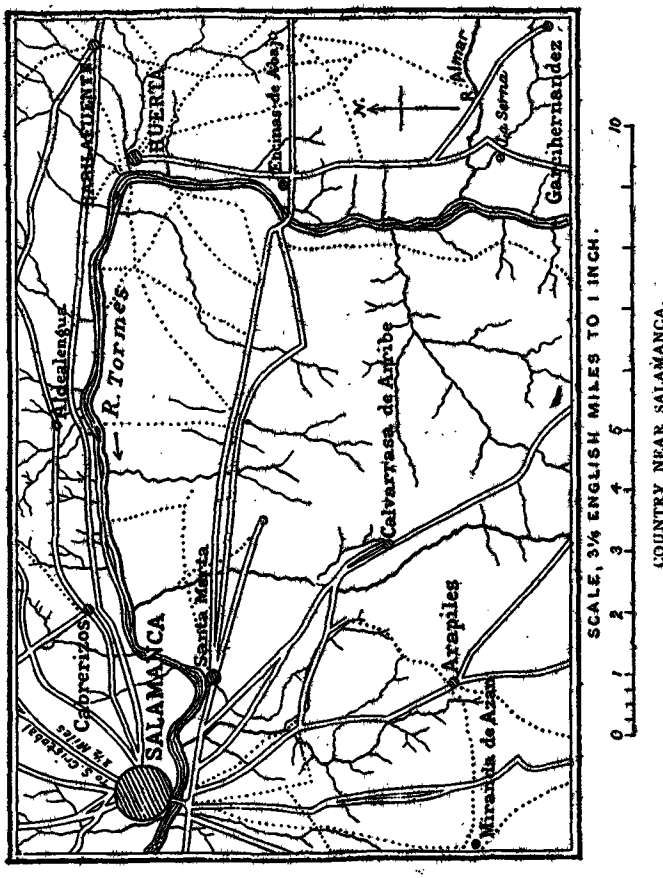
Five British squadrons (King's German Legion) attack an infantry rear-guard of a French division, break two squares, and capture a general and 1000 prisoners.

BEFORE I attempt to describe this remarkable action, it may be well that I should state briefly the attendant circumstances.

The Duke of Wellington, being unable to maintain the blockade of Cuidad Rodrigo, had retired behind the Coa river in November, 1811; but the year 1812 opened favourably for the British arms. Napoleon, in anticipation of the campaign in Russia, had recalled 60,000 of the best troops from Spain, and not only were most of the senior generals quarrelling amongst themselves, but the duke's immediate opponent, Marshal Marmont, and King Joseph Bonaparte were on bad terms.

Early in 1812, Wellington having assaulted successfully, though with heavy loss, both Cuidad Rodrigo and Badajoz, and having surprised the Bridge-head of Almarez, later laid siege to the forts of Salamanca, and this operation causing Marmont to advance, brought on the decisive battle of the 22nd July. Had Marmont exercised a little more patience, his adversary must have retired back into Portugal, for

he was in such want of money as to be unable to feed his troops, and the Portuguese were deserting to avoid starvation.



No. VII.

COUNTRY NEAR SALAMANCA.

It is no part of my purpose, in this paper, to discuss the interesting operations which preceded the battle, or the action, which was itself crowded with dramatic

incidents; but I may mention the steady conduct of the men who distinguished themselves in the retreat on the 24th June, as they did in the pursuit of the French on the 23rd July.

After several preliminary manœuvres, at 2 a.m. on the morning of the 24th June, the French army advanced in order of battle. Two days earlier, *i.e.* on the 22nd June, Brigadier-general von Bock's brigade had been sent across the Tormes river, to watch the ford at Huerta. The Light division was at the ford of Aldea Lengua, while Sir Thomas Graham was encamped with two divisions near the ford of Santa Marta. When, at daylight on the 24th, the fog lifted, General Bock, with six squadrons, was seen retiring in regularly formed lines before 12,000 French troops of all Arms of the service, and in spite of the fire of many batteries, which tore up the ground around his squadrons, that officer continued his retreat, as Napier writes, "regardless alike of the cannonade and the light horsemen on his flanks." This retirement was continued, until, from a height, the French perceived Sir Thomas Graham's force drawn up in position, with eighteen guns on a line perpendicular to the Tormes, and still further back were seen columns near Santa Marta. Marmont then hastily withdrew, and recrossing the Tormes, returned to his former ground. The manner in which von Bock's squadrons were handled elicited the admiration of all the English troops.

"One story is good till another is told." Æsop's deduction from the lion's argument when replying to the boasts of the traveller, is applicable generally to the history of the heroes of my tale, and particularly to the narratives of this combat, for whereas Lord

Wellington, who saw some of the charges delivered, wrote, "The whole body of the infantry, consisting of three battalions of the enemy's first divisions, were made prisoners," nevertheless we now know that General Foy was in one of the squares which, resisting all attacks, eventually retreated in safety. English and French authors differ as to the number of prisoners taken, the former alleging their numbers were nearly 1400, while the latter admit that 900 were captured. Both generals employed nearly identical language in describing the daring courage shown by Bock's brigade of the King's German Legion. Wellington wrote, "I never witnessed a more gallant charge," and Foy described it as "the most daring charge made during the Peninsular War." It is doubtful whether this and other grand examples of the power of cavalry, exemplified by our Hanoverian comrades, are sufficiently known to British soldiers of to-day, and I cite some of them not only from feelings of deep admiration, but also because I believe, under like conditions, able and determined cavalry leaders can gather now, as the German Legion did on the 23rd July, 1812, the fruits of a previous victory. In this instance, an infantry rear-guard, which had been marching and fighting for a week in the hottest season of the year, was, as often happens in a retreat, short of ammunition, and was, moreover, abandoned by its own cavalry when overtaken by the Cavalry of the Legion.

Some soldiers, mainly those who have not seen hard fighting, believe that efficient well-trained infantry can always stop by volleys the advance of cavalry, while it is still far distant. They argue, from the range practices of our musketry courses, that

modern rifles render past experience of little value, and to a certain extent this is so where the ground offers a perfect view of troops advancing to the attack; but then such ground is seldom available in war. In the action I am about to describe, the broken ground hid the enemy so completely that the Duke of Wellington himself was unaware of the presence of infantry, and saw only cavalry in his front. Moreover, although we have improved rifles, the human heart is no firmer than it was seventy years ago. Those who read Achievement No. XI. will observe that the position of the dead bodies of men and horses in the undulating ground near Mars-la-Tour, corroborated the accounts in the "Regimental History" of the 1st Dragoon Guards, which show that the only serious loss in squadrons occurred just as they closed on the infantry. That infantry had as good a rifle (for this argument) as any now in use, and the "Regimental Records" prove clearly that while some men fell under distant rifle fire during the advance, yet the formation was not seriously deranged till the last volley struck the squadrons just as they closed on the foe.

Most English officers gather their knowledge of events in the Peninsular War from the eloquent pages of Napier, our greatest military historian. Whether we accept or reject the accuracy of Alison's assertion that Napier was not favourable to cavalry as an Arm in war, we must admit, from what both friends and foes—who witnessed the Garcia Hernandez charge—said of it, that Napier's account describes but imperfectly what took place; and the inadequacy of his accounts of what the King's German Legion did at some other places is shown by his omitting

entirely to mention that the 1st Hussar regiment of the Legion captured four guns in the battle of Salamanca, 24 hours before Von Bock's achievement. This appears, however, to be capable of explanation, without our admitting that Napier allowed his preference for infantry to blind his judgment. Authors can write only from what they see or hear. Napier's battalion, the 43rd Light Infantry, was in reserve on the 22nd July, 1812, and having marched on the evening of the 22nd towards Huerta, did not reach Garcia Hernandez on the 23rd July until long after the action. That gifted author learnt details about other corps from the officers still serving in them when the "History" was being written, but the King's German Legion was disbanded in 1816, and for sixteen years no adequate effort was made to record, fully and permanently, "the eminently conspicuous bravery" shown by the officers and men who "participated in those achievements which have conferred the highest lustre on the British army."

Though we learn little about the King's German Legion from the standard authority on our greatest war, yet their records, nevertheless, are replete with glorious deeds. When the Hanoverian army was dissolved, in January, 1803, His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, father of our late commander-in-chief, was authorized, after some previous failures, to raise a force of Germans, in the first instance enlisting men for seven years' service, each recruit receiving a bounty of £7 12*s.* 6*d.* The bulk of the men had served in the Electoral army, and were of a higher class than the average sort of soldiers. The strength of the Legion was soon increased, and in

* Extract from an order dated Horse Guards, 21st December, 1815.

1806 it consisted of four cavalry regiments, nine battalions, and six batteries of artillery. It was employed continuously and actively from 1807, when it took part in the expedition against the Danes, to the peace in 1815, sharing in nearly every victory gained by the British army in Europe. The cavalry was remarkable for vigilance and calculating audacity from its first campaign under English generals in the Danish expedition, to Waterloo, its last battle, where its conduct gained Lord Anglesey's warm approval. After criticizing, in a letter, the inaction of some foreign cavalry, he adds, "I class the German Legion entirely with the British cavalry." It numbered in its Ranks many brave men, but the name of Captain Krauchenberg was pre-eminent, not only for courage, but also for skilful leading, and it constantly appears in the history of the Legion. He distinguished himself as a cornet in the events leading up to the disbanding of the Hanoverian army in 1803. At 1 a.m. on the 18th of August, 1807, when in pursuit of a convoy, he arrived with his squadron before Fort Friedericks werk, and imposing on its commander, induced him to surrender the fort with its garrison of 800 men as well as the convoy which had taken shelter within its walls. Similar audacious courage was shown again six years later by Von Bock's brigade in the combat of the 23rd July, 1812, described below.

The men of the Legion fought a little and suffered a great deal in common with their British comrades in the unfortunate Walcheren expedition. In Sir John Moore's retreat towards Corunna, the 3rd Hussars of the Legion supported most opportunely, outside Benavente, the picquets of the British cavalry at

a critical moment. There had been continuous skirmishing during the last week of December, 1808. On the 28th of that month, the German Hussars drove back the French cavalry which had been following in pursuit. They remained out as rear-guard on the left bank of the Esla, in heavy rain and snow, till after nightfall on the 28th, and were then sent to their billets with orders to unsaddle and be ready to move early next day. Similar orders given to the British cavalry were carried out, but the Germans, by direction of their commanding officer, kept their horses saddled up, and when the English picquets were attacked at daybreak on the 29th by General Lefebvre Desnoüettes with 600 cavalry of the Imperial Guard, they hurried off without forming up, to support the outlying picquets (furnished by the 7th, 10th, and 18th Hussars), commanded by Colonel Otway, which were falling back. The Germans, advancing in "Rank entire," arrived in time to rally the picquets, which, after a successful charge, were retiring rapidly before superior numbers, and the British picquets then charged again with them, and there ensued a hand-to-hand struggle under the windows of the houses of Benavente, the result of which was, however, still doubtful when the 10th Hussars and remainder of the German Legion arrived, and Lord Paget took command.

Napier devotes one and a quarter pages to this combat, mainly in praise of the English, and gives but three lines to the King's German Legion, saying, "the picquets retired fighting, but being joined by a party of the 3rd German Hussars, they charged the leading French squadron with some effect." Nevertheless, while the total loss on the British side was

about fifty casualties, the greater number of these occurred in the German Legion, who record forty-six. The picquet of the 7th Hussars, however, one of the first engaged, had also several killed or wounded.

When, in June, 1810, General Crauford decided to hold, with the Light division, his position on the right bank of the Coa, he had learnt by four months' previous experience to appreciate the vigilance of the King's German Legion. On the 26th of that month Lord Wellington, who had noticed that their horses were overworked, sent two squadrons of English dragoons to relieve them on the advanced outpost line, but Crauford declined to let the Germans go until he was personally ordered by Lord Wellington to do so. They, however, remained in reserve, and on the 4th July, an hour before daybreak, when the British picquet was driven in so hastily from Marialva that it appeared at Gallegos with the enemy at its heels, the Reserve of the outposts, under Lieut.-colonel Arenstschildt, was drawn up ready to receive it, four miles in front of the Light division, Captain Krauchenberg's squadron and a troop of an English regiment being in front, with two British squadrons and guns further back. Captain Krauchenberg by galloping forward towards the French checked their advance, till Lieut.-colonel Arenstchildt retired, in conformity with his orders not to fight unnecessarily. Krauchenberg then conformed to the movement, followed closely by the enemy, who crossed the bridge over the stream on the heels of the last of the German skirmishers.

Krauchenberg had but just reformed his squadron when, although he saw the French had three regiments

coming on in column, he rode headlong at them as they were reforming after crossing the bridge, and having killed the leaders, overthrew the front ranks, and drove the whole back. This attack was the more creditable from the following attendant circumstances. Alongside the half squadron of the King's German Legion, then nearest to the enemy, was a troop of English cavalry, to the commanding officer of which Krauchenberg proposed that they should attack simultaneously, but the Englishman replied that he did not consider his orders justified him in doing so; then the gallant German charged with his troop alone.* The Hussars cut down three officers and from ten to fifteen men, having themselves four men wounded, and three horses killed or wounded. When the French again advanced, Krauchenberg charged them once more, and the banks of the stream being too swampy to allow them to cross except at the bridge, maintained his position until Lord Wellington personally sent him an order to fall back on the infantry now in position 2000 yards in the rear. Crauford, who was also present, and whose fiery nature rendered him sympathetic with such deeds, published next day in Divisional orders his appreciation of the conduct of the 1st German Hussars, "who with only part of a squadron, charged about three times their numbers of the enemy close in front of a column, to the admiration of all who saw it." Lord Wellington, in acknowledging the receipt of the Divisional order, added a warm expression "of his approval of the manner in which the regiment had carried out its long and fatiguing outpost duties." This discrimination in selecting performance of duties for praise

* See Napier, vol. iii. p. 285.

is characteristic of the two generals, Crauford and Wellington.

Cavalry officers, when training their squadrons, may find it useful to refer to, and collate, Beamish's and Napier's accounts of the following operations:—General Crauford's attempt to cut off foraging parties on the 11th July, 1810; the Outpost affairs of the 16th and 17th September; and the Rear-guard action of the 9th October, when losses were incurred in consequence of the Supports and Reserves being too far back from the picquet. It will be observed on this last occasion that the men had received no rations for forty-eight hours, nor the horses any forage for twenty-four hours.

In the diaries of General Foy, which form the basis of his "History of the Peninsular War," published after his death, there is high praise of the men of the German Legion, not only for their skill in Outpost duty, but also for their bravery, which he says was "unsurpassed by any of the troops serving in the Peninsula." Now, Foy had gained great experience of the Germans, having been opposed to them for some time. His opinions and criticisms on our troops would have probably been toned down had he lived to revise his book, but as we may see from his word-portrait of Napoleon, quoted recently in Rope's "Campaign of Waterloo," his judgment was calm and impartial. Soldiers may hesitate to accept the gifted American's opinions on military points where they conflict with those of professional writers of acknowledged ability, but the wonderful industry, clearness of views, and fairness of Mr. Rope's summing-up on disputed points, and his previous diligent study of the Napoleonic epoch, render his tribute to

General Foy's impartiality valuable for my purpose, which is to show how some great deeds were achieved by Cavalry, irrespective of its nationality.

While Beamish's accounts are well worthy of study by squadron leaders who may be employed on outposts or have to command a rear-guard pressed by an enemy, the "Golden Deeds" of private soldiers in the records of the Legion are full of interest for the Rank and File of cavalry. Colonel Lonsdale Hale, in an excellent lecture delivered to the non-commissioned officers of the Aldershot Cavalry brigade in 1889, pointed out the great importance of every private realizing that the fate of armies may depend on his efficiency in reconnoitring duties. In order, however, to achieve success in reconnoitring, a soldier must not only be thoroughly instructed, brave, and a good horseman, but also become master of his weapon, be it lance or sword. The difficulty of killing or capturing a man thus qualified may be seen from the deeds of Private Schroeder, 1st Hussars King's German Legion, who is said to have cut down twelve Frenchmen, and to have individually captured twenty-seven prisoners during the years 1810–12. The French got to recognize him, and would call out to him by name, when he was seen advancing in the skirmishes which were of daily occurrence in the spring and summer of 1810. He established such a reputation that a French officer coming over with a flag of truce asked to see him.

Yet Schroeder was not the only hero of the Legion. During the bloody struggle for the hill of Albuera, on the 16th May, 1811, Corporal Fincke so greatly distinguished himself that Lord Wellington sent him £20

for his conduct under the following circumstances:—Captain Cleve's battery, preceding Colonel Colborne's brigade up the hill, had just unlimbered, when it was caught, while the brigade was deploying, by some Polish Lancers, and Hussars. These horsemen, under cover of thick mist and rain, had got behind the right flank and rear of the brigade, unperceived, and even then were mistaken for Spaniards until they closed on our infantry, spearing the men and scattering them in all directions. Cleve's battery became the centre of the struggle, and all the gunners of the right section were killed by the Lancers. Owing to the exertions of two sergeants, the left Section was limbered up, and was galloping to the rear when the shaft horse of one gun fell wounded, and the Lead driver of the other was killed. Fincke, jumping from his horse, took the place of the Lead driver and carried off the gun through the midst of the enemy's cavalry, his own horse, though loose, by galloping at his side, saving him from the sword-cuts of the pursuing foe. The other guns, both British and German, were abandoned, but were shortly afterwards re-taken by General Lumley's cavalry.

Many readers of Marbot's life, who have not seen War, doubt his accuracy, but the Germans, who esteem small grants of money more highly than we do, and who are careful not to give rewards without the full assurance of their having been duly earned, have attested in the Guelphic Archives (given in the appendix of Beamish's second volume), "Accounts of courageous acts by individual Rank and File of the German Legion," which read like our Victoria Cross records, and rival many of Marbot's exploits.

Before and indeed after, the war in the Crimea,

British cavalry soldiers were not allowed, when mounted, to practise feats of arms for fear of laming the horses, and were individually no match for Sikhs; but our system of training has, in later time, greatly improved, and it is now certain that men selected from our Ranks could account satisfactorily for the finest mounted swordsmen in the world. I think it well our horsemen should have an opportunity of learning what the comrades of their predecessors did ere they carried out the hardest task the cavalry soldier can be ordered to attempt, *i.e.* the breaking of a square of brave men.

GARCIA HERNANDEZ.

On the 22nd July, 1812, when the sun went down, the French were fighting hard to avoid being driven into the Tormes. Marshal Marmont had been severely wounded in the early part of the battle: his successor, Bonnet, was hit immediately afterwards, and the retreat was now being conducted by General Clauzel, who also had been severely wounded, in the leg. Lord Wellington being under the impression that the Spaniards held the castle of Alba de Tormes, which commanded the bridge at that place, led the 1st and Light division and the cavalry towards Huerta, but at the same time the French were crossing at Alba de Tormes, and by the fords near the bridge at that place, ten miles above Huerta. At 10 p.m. on the 22nd the French were heard crossing the bridge, but it was not until daybreak the following morning that the true line of retreat through Alba de Tormes towards Peneranda was discovered. During the battle of the previous day, Arenstchildt's Light

brigade had successfully delivered a dashing charge along the ravine of the Zurguen, but Bock's brigade, consisting of the 1st and 2nd Dragoons of the Legion, of whose glorious achievements I am about to write, had been held in Reserve, upon the left of the Allied army. Before daybreak it left its bivouac at Pelebravo, and the brigade, as well as that of Major-general Anson, defiled past Lord Wellington on the river bank, and after some delay caused by the passage of the infantry, reached the right bank of the Tormes at eight o'clock, and then advanced in "column of Route," Anson's brigade leading.

*Description of Ground.**—The scene of action is bounded on the North by the river Almar and its tributary the Marganon, and on the South by the Alaraz or Garci Caballero. The country lying between the streams consists of broken hills, the slopes of which are generally steep and well defined on the Southern sides, but fall gently towards the valley of the Almar. Both rivers are fordable at several places. Between the valley of the Alaraz and the Southern crest of the hills, a space varying from 1200 to 1500 yards, the country is open, with large patches of cultivation. The fields are generally unfenced except some near the crest of the hills, close to the road between Garcia Hernandez and Penerandilla. The roads are mere cart tracks, and as they do not form communication between any towns of importance, are much neglected.

General Foy's division, which furnished the French Rear-guard, had been constantly moving since the 14th July. When Marshal Marmont wished to recross the Douro, in his advance on Salamanca, he massed his

* See map at end of chapter.

troops between Toro, and Tordesillas, and in order to deceive Wellington marched troops constantly down the right bank of the river in full view of the English forces, sending them back during the night to re-occupy their former positions. Having thus induced Wellington to concentrate on his left, Marmont crossed the river, and was on the evening of the 17th at Nava del Rey. From that day, till the 22nd, the opposing forces were manœuvring in close proximity. The heat was excessive, and on the 19th Marmont was obliged to halt till four o'clock in the afternoon to allow some of his stragglers to rejoin, Foy's division having covered forty-two miles in one day. The English troops had made much shorter marches, but, nevertheless, Marmont claims to have taken, on the 20th July, between 300 and 400 stragglers. Our troops had some few hours' rest after the battle of the 22nd, but the French were necessarily moving all night, and could have had but little to eat for twenty-four hours.

When the leading British cavalry brigade came out on the plain about 10 a.m., several French squadrons were drawn up in line on the level ground, and some battalions of infantry were standing in squares on the hills to the Northward. The infantry, 6th Light and 69th regiments, were on the right of the cavalry and somewhat advanced, and in the intervals between the squares, the artillery of the division was drawn up. The rear battalion was moving in column up a slope to gain the crest of the high ground. Lord Wellington, who commanded in person, at first perceived the horsemen only, the artillery and infantry being concealed by an intervening hill, and he ordered the two brigades to attack the enemy's cavalry.

Anson's brigade moved straight to its front against the left wing of the French squadrons. These did not await the shock, but retiring hastily, were followed up by the brigade.

When Colonel Bock received the orders to charge, his brigade was in "sections of threes," moving at the gallop up a narrow valley. He gave the order, "On the move—Line to the front." Though this movement was obviously impossible, since the rear could not close up, yet it was attempted, and the whole column hurried on, making straight for the right flank of the enemy's cavalry. In front of the leading squadron rode the brigadier-general commanding the brigade, the two field officers of the regiment and Lieut.-colonel May, Royal Artillery, aide-de-camp to Lord Wellington, who had brought the order to charge. Colonel Bock, being short-sighted, observed to Colonel May, "But you will show us the enemy?" which he did effectually, guiding a squadron up to the bayonets of a square. Before the leading squadron (Hattorf's) could close with the cavalry in its front, the French retired, conforming with the squadrons on the left, which had been driven back by Anson's brigade, and von Hattorf followed in pursuit. Coming under fire of the infantry squares on the hill, Colonel May, and several men and horses, fell, and the pursuit of the cavalry was discontinued.

Captain Gustavus von Der Decken, seeing that if he followed the leading squadron he must pass close under the fire of the column which, having been furthest in rear, had halted on the slope of the hill, resolved to attack it. This battalion (the 6th Light Infantry regiment) stood on the lower slopes of the

hill, and, according to Napier, had not time to form square. This statement is, however, in direct conflict with the German narrative, and Marmont, in his Memoirs, says distinctly it was in square. General Sarazin, also, in mentioning the combat, writes: "Dont les carrés furent rompus, sabrés et dispersés." Whatever may have been the formation, the men, though dust partly hid the horsemen, fired steadily, and a lieutenant and many men and horses were killed, von Der Decken falling mortally wounded when a hundred yards from the enemy. Then Captain von Usla Gleichen, the left troop leader, dashing up to the front, wheeled his troop to the right, as the right troop rode at another side of the square. The two front ranks, kneeling with the rear ranks standing behind, in all six deep, presented an apparently impenetrable barrier, but a shot from one of the kneeling ranks, by killing a horse, threw both it and its rider on the bayonets, and into the gap thus made rode the dragoons. Though Bock's men and horses at first fell fast, the formation of the infantry once broken, the whole battalion was either sabred or taken prisoners.

While the 3rd or left squadron was thus achieving a glorious success, Captain von Reitzenstein, with the second squadron, seeing what the left squadron was doing, galloped at the next square, which stood on the crest of the hill, being met with a steady and well-directed fire. His two lieutenants were struck down as the squadron closed on the foe; but the French infantry, seeing the square first attacked was broken, lost heart, and some few men leaving the ranks, Reitzenstein penetrated the square, and the greater part of the battalion was captured.

Some, however, throwing away their arms, escaped by scrambling over adjoining enclosures.

A third square, rapidly formed from those which had been previously overthrown, was now attacked by the second and third squadrons of the 2nd regiment. To the support of this square there came a few cavalry, which dispersed, however, on being charged, and the Germans then riding straight at the infantry, completely shattered its formation. Standing further back was yet another square of the 69th regiment, in which stood General Foy, and it was joined by some of the fugitives from the battalions just dispersed. Captain Baron Mashalk led the remnant of one and a half squadrons against it; and although some of the Frenchmen, having no further ammunition, were reduced to throwing stones, yet they stood firm, and the Germans were beaten off, Captain von Usla Gleichen, who had broken the first square, being killed. Brigadier-general Mollard, who commanded the rear brigade of Foy's division, was taken prisoner, with from 900 to 1400 of his men (according to the varying estimates of the respective nationalities). The French accounts say the 69th regiment saved the guns, but it does not appear that they came into action.

I have been unable to ascertain the exact number of sabres present under von Bock. The brigade embarked for the Peninsula at Christmas the previous year with 400 horses to a regiment; and as the reinforcements, including those of the cavalry, did not reach Wellington till after the battle of Salamanca, the squadrons (three) could not have numbered more than 110 horses. The loss was four officers, forty-eight Rank and File, and sixty-seven

horses killed; two officers, fifty-six Rank and File, and forty-six horses wounded, while six men and four horses were taken by the enemy. His Royal Highness the Prince Regent, to mark his appreciation of these glorious deeds, made permanent in the English army the temporary rank which the officers of this brigade then held.

The King's German Legion was not actively engaged on the 23rd July after its brilliant performance of the morning, but the French rear-guard was overtaken once more later in the day by the troops acting under the direct command of Lord Wellington, who was in the extreme front with one squadron and a battery, which is now represented by No. 1 Second Depôt division.* The battery, having outstripped the march of the infantry, was threatened by French cavalry, and Lord Wellington, dismounting, personally directed the fire of the guns. This indicates that on the 23rd July his conduct was not open to the criticism of being slack in following a beaten enemy (see Napier, vol. v. p. 184). As Clauzel's men did not halt on the 23rd until they reached Flores de 'Avila, a distance of forty miles, the English infantry, which started twelve miles further back, could not have overtaken them. Lord Wellington himself, however, must have been close on their heels, as his despatch is dated on the 24th July from that town. General Clauzel was joined on the evening of the 23rd by 1500 cavalry and twenty guns detached from the army of the North. He would probably have had more effectives on the 24th if the pursuit of our cavalry and the state of his troops had permitted of his marching more slowly,

* See *Proceedings of the Royal Artillery Institution.*

for irrespective of the loss in killed, wounded, and prisoners, amounting to 12,500, this rapid retreat cost him at least temporarily nearly 7000 stragglers. In addition to the marches and countermarches made behind the Douro, the French army of 42,000 men, between the 18th and 30th July, marched 200 miles, and fought four times.

Comments.—It is interesting to observe how generously the English Government behaved when dispensing with the services of the King's German Legion in 1856. Possibly the exceptional services rendered by their predecessors forty years earlier induced such treatment. I do not know all the conditions, but in 1816 even the greatcoats were returned into store if they had not been in wear for at least two years. In 1856 the men received a gratuity of a year's pay, and had the option either of a free passage to their homes, or to North America, or to the Cape of Good Hope. About 2300 settled down at the Cape as military colonists, with donations of land and a sum of money to build a house.

Cavalry officers will observe the grave error of judgment which induced the brigadier in command to accompany, with the field officers of the regiment, the leading squadron of the column, and the consequent disconnected though very gallant charges which were made on the initiative of five squadron leaders, while the sixth squadron of the brigade remained unemployed. Lord Anglesey, who did not spare himself when, by stating facts, he could teach us lessons, writing in 1839 of the cavalry combats of Waterloo, says: "I committed a grave mistake in having led the attack. . . . If I had placed myself

at the head of the second line there is no saying what great advantages might not have been attained.

I am the less pardonable because I had already suffered from a similar error."

In order that we may consider what are the chances of attacking a rear-guard, as was done so successfully on the 23rd July, 1812, it must be borne in mind—

1st. That the French infantry had been fighting from 4 to 9 p.m. on the 22nd July.

2nd. That it had been moving throughout the night, and next morning until overtaken by pursuing cavalry.

3rd. That the strain on the mental and physical strength of the men must have seriously impaired their powers of resistance.

4th. That having had no opportunity of obtaining more ammunition after the battle, the men were reduced to throwing stones at the horsemen in the last charge.

I do not advocate indiscriminate charging of infantry in close formation, but rather that such, when unshaken, should be avoided. This will, however, seldom be the case in a pursuit following immediately on a decisive battle. I will conclude this narrative with the expression of my conviction that my younger comrades, with equal courage, better training, and consequently greater skill than their predecessors possessed, will, if opportunity offers, surpass all previous achievements.

MAP OF THE COUNTRY NEAR GARCIA HERNANDEZ.

CAVALRY ACTION FOUGHT JULY 23RD, 1812.

(To face p. 76.

No. V.

DRESDEN

27th August, 1813.

No. V.

DRESDEN, *27th August*, 1813.

General Prince Murat, with 10,000 cavalry and Victor's Army Corps in support, kills or wounds 4000 men, and takes 12,000 prisoners.

FIELD-MARSHAL VISCOUNT WOLSELEY, in his "Downfall of Napoleon," shows clearly how the fatal results of the campaign in Russia (1812) affected the Emperor's power; and Alison points out that it became necessary, at this period, to conscribe 1 in every 40 males of the population of France, whereas 1 in 100 is the maximum which should be taken if that country is to be properly cultivated. The conscription of men at twenty years of age for the year 1813 should have fallen on those born in 1793, but as 1,200,000 were taken into the army that year, they had no children at the time, and thus a large number of the men drafted into the ranks in 1813 were not more than eighteen years of age. This was very detrimental to efficiency in the infantry, and was brought forcibly to Napoleon's mind when he saw the boyish faces and forms of the dead in riding over the battle-field of Lutzen (2nd May, 1813).

It takes three times as long to train cavalry soldiers as infantry, and the cost is three times greater, so the

difficulties of the Mounted branches were even more serious than those of dismounted corps.

When we reflect that the Moscow campaign cost the Empire 450,000 men in killed, wounded, sick, and prisoners, 930 cannon, and 186,000 horses, we must, indeed, marvel at Napoleon's extraordinary energy in putting new armies into the field between the 19th December, 1812, when he reached Paris, and the spring of 1813, wanting though they were in training and discipline.

The correspondence of the Emperor and his subordinate generals at this period is very instructive. The Duke of Ragusa (Marmont), writing from Hanau on the 2nd April, 1813, to the chief of the Staff, reports: "I have been obliged to draw corporals and old soldiers from three different regiments * to help the 23rd Light Infantry. This regiment has only one officer per company, scarcely one sergeant per company, and no corporal with more than three months' service." And some days later the Marshal urges that the Emperor may be informed that an Army Corps without officers, and some old soldiers to instruct recruits, cannot be made fit for Field service. He proceeds, further, to state that he has not a single cavalry soldier, no Staff officers, no doctors, no ambulance waggons, and not even one Commissariat officer. He finishes up his letter by pointing out that, though he has a large number of men, they are wanting in all the machinery essential for the movements of an army.

Some of Napoleon's answers are quaint. He

* It is interesting to observe that one of these, the 37th Light Infantry, a fortnight later, on being threatened by cavalry at night, became panic-stricken and ran away, firing on its own divisional Staff-officers.

writes to Marmont, from Mayence, four separate letters on the 17th April to the following effect:—

"MY COUSIN,

"I have no news of your Army Corps. They tell me you report to the War Office. That is useless; your letters will be pigeon-holed! Let me know immediately what officers and stores you want."

The Emperor's power of work was marvellous. He instructed his Marshals how to organize Cavalry, Artillery, and Infantry; and, while urging them to inspect every company in every battalion in their commands, separately and closely, he directed that the regiments should be constantly practised in forming battalion squares. Marmont, in answering one of the Emperor's letters about the artillery, observes plaintively, that one draft of old soldiers had been already selected from the corps, and that to take 1000 more selected men away from a body of 9000, of which 4000 were actually recruits, would emasculate the fighting value of the remainder.

The Marshal's difficulties were great, for on the 26th April he reports that in one regiment over 100 men had neither trousers nor boots. Nothing was too great or too small for the Emperor's notice, for when notifying to the duke that he would shortly receive in his command a Spanish battalion, he directed that it should never be employed on advanced guard, or by itself, but only when surrounded by French battalions, lest it should desert to the enemy.

Marmont's work in superintending the formation of a cavalry Corps was soon interrupted, for he had to go

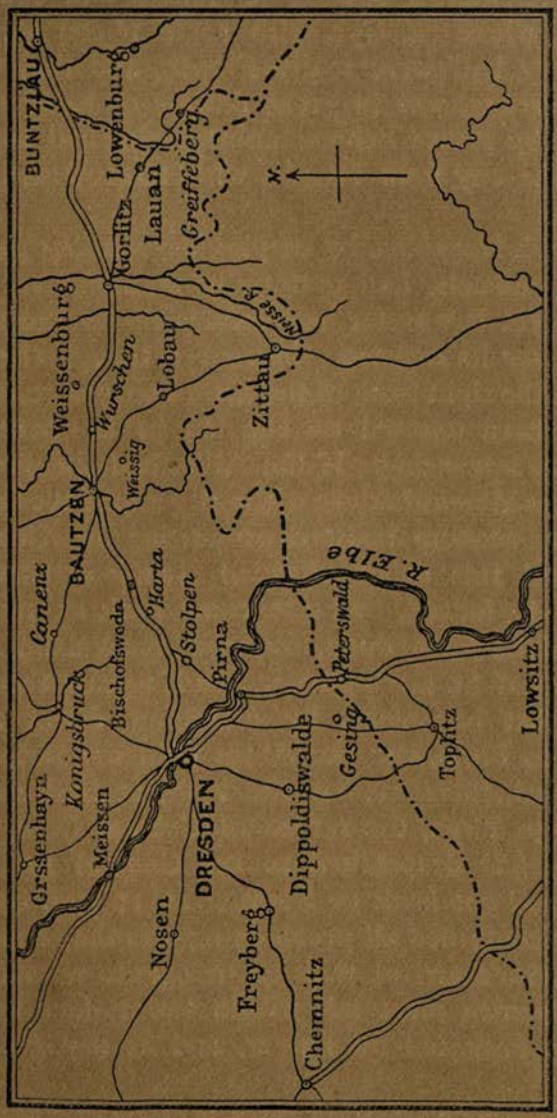
forward with his infantry. When we recall that few divisions of the so-called "Grand Army" had more than 800 or 900 men left of all Arms on the evacuation of Russia, and that practically no Army horses remained alive in December, 1812, we shall realize what war meant under Napoleon. When Marmont's corps marched from Hanau at the end of April, in spite of strenuous efforts, he could only make up four squadrons by taking all the effectives from eight different regiments.

The battles of Lutzen and Bautzen (20th May, 1813) were necessarily barren in results, since Napoleon had an insufficient number of horsemen to reap the fruits of the victories won by the infantry; and after that of Bautzen, where the ground was admirably suited for the operation of mounted troops, Napoleon must have felt acutely the weakness of these Arms when he exclaimed, "What! no guns, no prisoners—after all this slaughter!"

As both the Emperor and the Allies required time to bring up troops into the sphere of operations, an Armistice was concluded on the 4th June, to last till the 28th July, a date which was subsequently prolonged to the 10th August, with six days' notice prior to the renewal of hostilities. On the 14th, however, the Allies, alleging the French had infringed the truce, occupied Breslau, and Blucher, advancing on the 15th, surprised the French in their cantonments, and they fell back behind the river Bober.

Napoleon left Dresden the same day with the Imperial Guard, and on the 21st re-establishing the Lowenberg bridge under fire, drove back Yorck's Corps of Prussians. He now heard of the advance of the Allies from Prague, on Dresden, and, after

sending back the Guard on the 22nd—having next



No. IX.

THE COUNTRY NEAR DRESDEN.

day satisfied himself that Blucher was in full retreat—

he turned Westwards, ordering Marmont's Corps and Latour-Maubourg's cavalry to follow him towards Dresden, where St. Cyr, with some 18,000 men, of whom only half were really French, and they were mostly recruits, was in great danger of being overwhelmed by Prince Schwarzenberg, who had arrived outside the city from Prague, with 100,000 men and 250 guns.

Although Napoleon, by employing working parties of 3000 peasants, had materially strengthened the position, yet it was far too extensive for the force available for its defence. Moreover, though the defences on the right bank of the Elbe were secure, much less had been effected on the left bank, where the enemy was advancing. If the Allies had attacked on the 24th, as Moreau* advised, the city must have fallen, but Schwarzenberg insisted on waiting for Klenau's Corps, and this delay afforded Napoleon time to arrive. He, indeed, had not come back as quickly as he might have done, for, not recognizing the imminence of St. Cyr's danger, the Emperor thought at first that he might, by marching direct from Bautzen to Pirna, cut the Allies off from Bohemia. He awaited, therefore, on the 25th, at Stolpen, on the road to Pirna, the return of Colonel Gourgaud, whom he had despatched to see General St. Cyr. The Colonel got back to Stolpen at 11 p.m. on the 25th, and confirmed all previous reports that, short of the Emperor's arrival with an adequate number of troops, Dresden must fall within twenty-four hours. Napoleon hesitated no longer, and at daylight the

* After nine years' residence in America, to which country he retired after his condemnation in 1804, he came back to Europe and joined the Russian Headquarter Staff.

Guard, Victor's Corps, and the cavalry of Latour-Maubourg, all of which had covered 120 miles in the four previous days,* commenced a forced march Westwards.

Description of the Battle-field.†—The city of Dresden is divided by the Elbe into two parts, but we are now concerned only with the ground outside the old city, which is built on the left, or Southern bank, on nearly level ground.

Outside the slight defences which Napoleon had caused to be erected to protect the Southern suburbs, the ground to the Southward rises gradually, till, about two miles from the river, it attains a height of seventy feet above the city. Near Raecnitz the crest-line of the range runs generally East and West, till the Weisseritz stream cuts its way through the hills, as it flows down to the Elbe, passing between the suburb of Friedrichstadt and the city. This stream exercised great influence over the results of the battle, for troops posted on its left bank could not communicate with the main army except by the bridges at Lobtau and at Plauen. Just above Plauen the valley becomes a ravine with steep banks, which adds greatly to its importance as an obstacle.

Although the fields on the high ground to the Westward of the Weisseritz stream are unfenced, yet the vineyards, gardens, wells, and hamlets studded over the undulating country would have afforded the Austrian infantry considerable protection against the French cavalry, had musketry fire been available.

* This is the French statement, but Colonel Cathcart, in his "War in Russia and in Germany, 1812–13," also mentions that the French troops marched thirty miles for three successive days.

† See map at end of the chapter.

Moreover, though no use was made of the ravines between Dölzchen and Wolfnitz by the French cavalry, yet they were traversed by Victor's columns, which approached Metzko's division, unseen by the Austrians, and, as will be seen presently, by opportunely occupying his troops in front, materially aided Latour-Maubourg's turning movements. Between Dölzchen and Wolfnitz, on the Freiburg road, there are six of these hollows, running generally from South-west to the North-east, *i.e.* from the higher ground down to the Weisseritz valley.

Before daylight on the 26th August, St. Cyr had withdrawn his men into the suburbs of the city, and had been for hours anxiously looking towards the position of the Allies, momentarily expecting their attack, when, at 10 a.m., Napoleon galloped over the Elbe bridge, closely followed by the head of his columns, which continued to stream in unceasingly till sunset. At 4 p.m., after the Allied artillery had delivered a heavy cannonade, the infantry, descending from the elevated ground about Raecnitz, assaulted with great dash, and carried some of the outworks which covered the exits from the city, shouting, "To Paris! to Paris!" The head of one column broke in the Plauen gate, but then the French troops charged out, and, after some fierce fighting, by 9 p.m. had driven back the Allies to their former position. An hour later the Austrians made another attack on the Plauen gate, but it failed, Colonel Cambronne, with his men, taking a whole battalion prisoners, with its Colour. By midnight all was quiet, though the opposing forces were so close that the "Cantinières" * of both nations sat in the village of Strehlen, where

* Female sutlers.

Austrian and French officers and men drank together, and discussed the events of the battle.

Napoleon, on returning from the field, without taking a moment's rest, dictated instructions for the following day to Berthier, his Chief of the Staff, and at the first break of dawn their execution was commenced. The orders which dealt with the subject of my tale directed that the greater part of the cavalry (that of the Guard excepted) should move out by Friedrichstadt under command of Murat, who was to make a wide turning movement round the enemy's left flank, and cut off his retreat on Freiberg, while Marshal Victor attacked direct to his front on the Freiberg road, being accompanied by Pajol's division of cavalry. Marmont was to occupy the attention of the Allies on, and between, the Dippoldiswalde and Dohna roads, and Ney was to push vigorously forward on the Pilnitz road.*

About midnight rain began to fall, and somewhat later a storm burst, which extending over Poland, Hungary, Bohemia, and a great part of Germany, influenced materially the course of the battle next day. The rain, by rendering the muskets practically useless, not only made the infantry firearms innocuous, but rendered the artillery incapable of moving far off the main roads.

When Napoleon mounted his horse at 6 a.m. on the 27th August, rain was still falling in torrents, obscuring all objects but those near at hand; but the outposts of Victor's Corps reported that a part of the Austrian army was crossing the valley of the

* Jomini states this was the only battle in which Napoleon attacked on both flanks. The battle is remarkable also in that it was the last decisive victory won by the Emperor, since those of 1814 and 1815 were barren of results.

Weisseritz, and moving towards the high ground near Gorbitz, leaving, however, an interval of nearly a mile, where it was intended that Klenau's Corps should take up its position. On the evening of the 26th, however, when the Austrian cavalry was withdrawn from the ground about the Freiburg road, the leading division only of Klenau's corps, commanded by General Metzko, had arrived. Mumb's brigade, sent to reinforce Metzko, came up to the Westward of Gorbitz soon after daylight on the 27th, when the line of the Allies, North of the Weisseritz stream, stood practically as follows: Aloys Lichtenstein's division occupied Dölzchen and Rossthal and the intervening ground between the latter place and the Freiburg road, holding Nauslitz as an advanced post; and to the North of the Freiburg road stood Metzko's division, the extreme left being watched by a brigade of Hussars, and two squadrons of Cuirassiers.

The Austrian troops were, not unnaturally, depressed by the events of the preceding afternoon, when they had been badly beaten; they were also very short of food, deficient of equipment, and exhausted by long marches. Neither the Generals nor the Staff had any knowledge of the ground, and the blinding rain and mist added to their difficulties in becoming acquainted with it. On the other hand, some of the French officers were well acquainted with the position, St. Cyr's Corps having been left at Dresden when Napoleon marched to Silesia; the men had all the confidence accruing from the success of the previous day, and though very young and wanting in discipline, were commanded by general officers who had been for many years almost universally successful in war.

Victor assembled his Corps (the 2nd) between 6 and 7 a.m., formed in four columns, outside the Freiburg gate. These were followed by a brigade of cavalry; while North of the road, though somewhat in rear, moved General Pajol's cavalry division. Further to the North, Latour-Maubourg's Corps, acting under Prince Murat's orders, cleared the suburb of Friedrichstadt by 7 o'clock, and soon after 9 a.m., unperceived by the main body of the Austrians till it was too late for them to guard against the movement, 10,000 sabres, with six Horse batteries, had reached the rising ground overlooking Cotta. This cavalry Corps was composed of two divisions of Light cavalry, commanded by Generals Corbineau and Chastel, and a division of Dragoons and Carabiniers under General Bordesoulé. The strength and composition of Bordesoule's division indicates clearly the weakness of the French in cavalry: 1st brigade (General Bercheim), 6 squadrons; 2nd brigade (General Bessières), 8 squadrons; 3rd brigade (General Lessing), 1st and 2nd Regiment of Saxon Cuirassiers.

I will first describe General Victor's operation, for though nearly all the cavalry's captures were made at some distance from the infantry, yet the complete success of Murat's turning movement was greatly due to the support received from the infantry.

Victor brought three batteries into action in front of his four infantry columns, which moved, counting from South to North, respectively on Dölzchen, Nauslitz, Rossthal, and Wolfnitz, the latter column afterwards carrying Nieder Gorbitz. On Victor's right stood a part of Teste's division, a little to the East of Lobtau, the infantry and Murat's cavalry moving in concert, but the horsemen thrown forward in echelon.

Latour-Maubourg advanced in column to the North of Lobtau, where he deployed two lines facing Southwards, detaching a Cuirassier regiment to cover the right flank, while another Cuirassier regiment passed through the village of Cotta, which by this time had been evacuated by the brigade of Austrian Hussars. The Cuirassiers, now forming up a little to the North-east of Burgstädtel, were already actually in rear of the left of Metzko's division. The brigade of Austrian Hussars made a show of resistance, and then retired at a gallop to the South of Burgstädtel, where there was a desultory skirmish for a short time, until the Saxon Cuirassiers advanced to attack, when the Hussars retreated, in the first instance to Pennrich, but they were virtually not seen again on the field of battle, and were pursued by a half squadron of the Cuirassiers of the Guard.

Metzko, on seeing a mass of cavalry in his front and flank, fell back gradually through Gorbitz to Compitz, about which places all his men, as well as Mumb's brigade, were eventually destroyed or taken prisoners. As Metzko's troops retreated they were followed by the French Horse artillery, which, coming into action from hill to hill, inflicted considerable loss on this isolated force of Austrians.

Meanwhile Victor was pressing his attack. Nauslitz fell at the second assault, its defenders retiring to Rossthal, losing many men as they passed through the narrow village street, and the French columns passing up the hollow ways, perhaps not deep enough to be called ravines, but which concealed the columns from the view of the enemy, pushed on until they came to the head of these hollows to the Westward, where they open out on level ground.

Here the Austrians stood firm, but when another hitherto unperceived column emerged from the ravine midway between Rossthal and Dölzchen, the Austrian flank being completely turned, their line broke before the bayonet charge delivered by the French, and the men fled Northwards and Southwards, a battery narrowly escaping capture as the French infantry ran forward. Rossthal was now easily captured, 300 men being taken prisoners in one farm building, and with its fall, the right flank of General Aloys Lichtenstein's division was turned, part retiring into Neu Nimptsch, and part towards Dölzchen, those at the latter village preparing the vineyard walls to resist an attack from the Northward, while some of their comrades were still near Neu Nimptsch, facing Eastward.

Dölzchen, standing 100 feet above the plain, was naturally strong from its position, and the French delivered three unsuccessful assaults, but about 2 p.m. several of the houses caught fire. The French seized this opportunity, and renewing the attack, stormed the village. Its defenders broke up, and, panic-stricken, ran precipitately in every direction. It was fortunate for the French that the defeat of the Austrians at this point was complete, for Victor's men, once in the village, broke open the wine-cellars, and gave themselves up to the enjoyment of an unlimited supply of liquor.

Turning again to the cavalry, whose opportunity arrived when the Austrians were outflanked between Rossthal and Neu Nimptsch, I will deal first with the column which followed the infantry South of the Freiburg road. It co-operated with it, and assisted in driving the Austrians through Wolfnitz, and Southward up to the hill equi-distant between Ober Gorbitz

and Neu Nimptsch. While Nauslitz and Wolfnitz were being captured from Lichtenstein's men by the French, Metzko had fallen back to Ober Gorbitz, which he held with part of his infantry, while the brigade (Mumb) stood in the village to receive Murat's advancing column, which was preceded by both Horse and Field artillery, the latter having been brought up from Teste's division. The Austrians endeavoured to hold Gorbitz, but, threatened in front, flank, and rear, its defenders soon drew off towards Pesterwitz.

Time was now of great importance to the remainder of the Austrian infantry. Some of those who had held Wolfnitz were still coming in, and Victor's divisional cavalry, and that of Pajol, was approaching just as Bordesoule's cavalry was attacking the squares in the angle midway between Neu Nimptsch and Ober Gorbitz. At this moment a body of French infantry appeared, coming from the hollow ground South of the Freiburg road. The bravest men in such an unfortunate position would have been unable to resist. Pounded by artillery, charged by cavalry from the South-west and North, and threatened by the approaching infantry columns from the East, many of the Austrians were cut down, but the larger portion surrendered, while a few fled towards Pesterwitz. This action gave rise to several remarkable scenes. General Bordesoule confronted a brigade of Aloys Lichtenstein's division, formed in square. The French commander, riding to the front, summoned the Austrians to surrender, saying, "Your muskets won't go off!"

To which their leader replied, "Surrender! Never! If our muskets won't go off, your horses cannot charge in mud up to their hocks."

"That is right," replied Bordesoule; "but I will blow you to atoms with my guns."

"You have got none up with you," replied the Austrian.

"Yes, I have," was the reply, and a battery of Horse artillery trotting up, unlimbered within 100 yards of the square. The Austrians, seeing the French gunners standing with lighted port fires in hand, realized the impossibility of further resistance, and surrendered.

According to General Marbot's narrative, it was the Emperor's foresight which enabled the Horse and Field batteries to move over the sodden ground, for the previous evening he had supplemented the teams of his artillery by horses taken from the transport then standing idle within the city.

During the struggle of Horsemen against Footmen, who were unable to fire, several expedients were adopted in order to break the ranks of the steadfast Austrian infantry, who, by stabbing the noses of their opponents' horses—which seldom approached faster than at the walk—for some time effectually resisted all attacks. One square was broken by the expedient of sending forward Cuirassiers with drawn pistols, who, riding close up to the ranks, shot the infantry, and then, being followed by squadrons in mass, broke in over the fallen bodies.

With the capture of Ober Gorbitz, all communication between Metzko's and Aloys Lichtenstein's divisions was arrested. The Austrian Field-marshal, Weissenwolf, who was himself near Dölzchen, at this time ordered General Metzko to retire, but it was now too late to save the division. While these events were happening in the Plauen valley, and on its

slopes South of the Freiburg road, Latour-Maubourg's Corps had been actively operating against Metzko's left. Prince Murat, in the morning, had sent a brigade to the extreme North of the battle-field, and a detachment from it seized Pennrich, thus completely separating the Corps of General Klenau from Metzko, and barring the latter's retreat to the Westward.

While the fight about Nieder Gorbitz was progressing, a brigade of Latour-Maubourg's command moved from the Northward through Gorbitz, where it turned to the Westward, and on coming to the open ground immediately to the West of that village, the squadrons found themselves in front of an Austrian battery, flanked on either side by two large squares. The battery opened fire as the French cavalry appeared, but their guns were laid too high, and the only loss at this time inflicted on the cavalry was caused by a party of Riflemen posted in a ravine behind some trees. Possibly they had another form of fire-arm, but at all events they kept up a warm fire, which would have been more serious had not a French infantry column appeared at that moment, which, attacking the Riflemen, drove them off. The French cavalry now advanced on the squares, and the battery, abandoning its infantry, limbered up, and drove off. Twice the attack, which was made at the walk, failed, the Austrians standing firm in ranks three deep, and presenting an unbroken front of bayonets. Latour-Maubourg, who was present, then sent for his personal escort, which consisted of half a squadron of Lancers, and having placed these at the head of the column, sent the mass forward. The Lancers speared the front rank of

the Austrian infantry, and then the squares were practically annihilated!

Murat himself, gorgeously attired, led a brigade of Cuirassiers and Carabiniers against one of the squares of General Metzko's division, and though the horses, sinking deep in the mud, could not be urged much beyond a walk, yet he broke through, for the powder in the pans of the flint-lock muskets was so saturated by the rain, which still fell heavily, that but few of the pieces would go off. Indeed, the guns of the artillery and the pistols of the Cuirassiers, which were protected in the wallets from the wet, were practically the only available fire-arms, for the French muskets were equally non-effective, and on the Eastern flank of the battle-field, at the same time, two battalions of the Imperial Guard carried position after position with the bayonet, without firing a shot.

When the French cavalry were seen to be pressing Lichtenstein's men, one division of Austrian cavalry was sent to assist their infantry comrades, but the slopes of the hills they descended were too slippery to enable horsemen to ride fast. They were met, moreover, by the Dragoons of General Doumerc's division, and repulsed, for nothing could be effected by one division against the overwhelming numbers of its foes. It is difficult to imagine any adequate reason for the Allies allowing 20,000 of their horsemen to remain idle in rear. The three divisions of Austrian Cuirassiers alone might, by confronting Latour-Maubourg's Corps, have saved the day. There were, moreover, at the time, thousands of Russian horsemen sitting motionless behind the Allied Centre and Right.

To revert for a minute to the other flank of the

battle-field. About 9 a.m. Napoleon had just ordered the artillery near the Dippoldiswalde gate to fire faster, in order to attract attention to that part of the battle-field, when the sky cleared a little for a few minutes, and the Allied Sovereigns, being seen on the hill above Raecnitz, attracted the aim of the French artillerymen. At 11 a.m. Napoleon, hearing Latour-Maubourg's guns in action to the Westward of Plauen, galloped to the extreme left (Eastern) flank, to push it forward as fast as the heavy ground, into which the infantry sank, would allow, in order to drive the right of the Allies off the Pilnitz (Pirna) road.

On the Eastern flank of the battle, where the Allies had the greater part of their armies, the Russian cavalry closed several times with General Nansouty's cavalry of the Guard, and gained some advantage, the French losing 500 prisoners. Irrespective, however, of the numbers engaged in these struggles, behind the Allied centre there sat 10,000 cavalry, commanded by the Grand Duke Constantine, who never drew their swords.

Eventually the six Austrian divisions on the left flank, separated from the Centre by the Weisseritz stream, and the Plauen ravine; assaulted in front by Victor's Corps, and attacked in rear by Murat's Cavalry, were utterly routed. By 2 p.m. Murat had killed or wounded between 4000 and 5000, and had captured 12,000 men. The cavalry then moved in pursuit, and next day took many more prisoners and guns; the total loss, which fell principally on the Austrians, being 22,000 casualties, 18,000 prisoners, 26 cannons, and 18 stands of Colours.

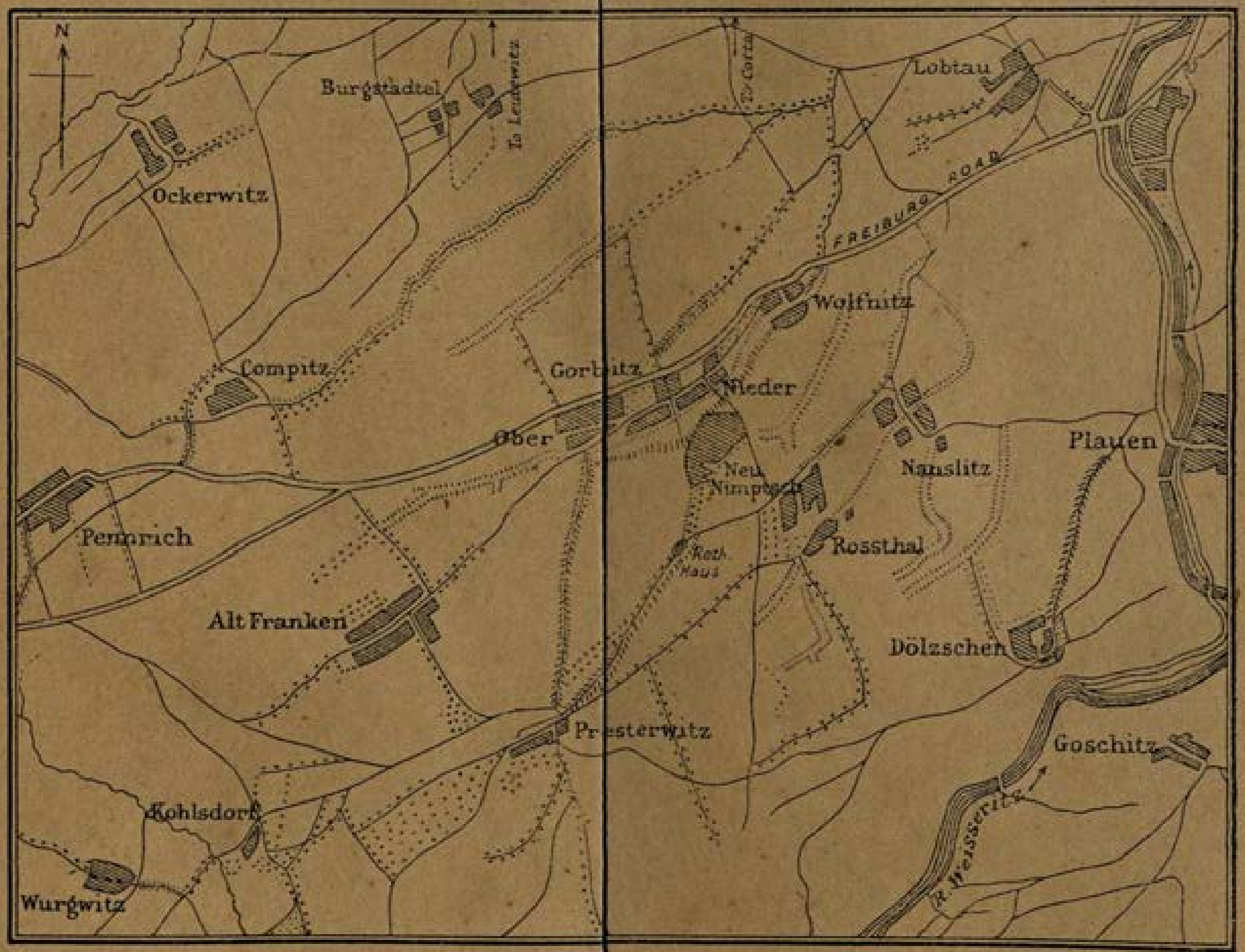
Ney had meanwhile pushed forward so far on the

Pilnitz road, that, had the Russians made a counter attack, as was intended,* he might have been driven back into the Elbe, but that Barclay de Tolly disapproved of the movement, and, at 4 p.m. Schwarzenberg having decided to fall back, by dusk the Allies were in full retreat.

The presence on a battle-field of Sovereigns who are not professional soldiers is always embarrassing to a Commander-in-chief, but in this instance the commander was trammelled by having two Monarchs, the Emperor Alexander and the King of Prussia, at his elbow. The divided counsels and want of unity of action in the Austrian army were fatal to the Allies.

The success of untrained French cavalry soldiers, mounted on unbroken horses, who could not be trusted to charge except in column, over the equally brave opposing Austrian infantry, was due to the rain having rendered fire-arms temporarily useless. This cannot occur again, but the introduction of breech-loading rifles will tend to greater expenditure of ammunition; and as Kempt's brigade, at Quatre Bras (1815), and the three battalions 24th (German) Regiment at Vionville (1870), expended all their ammunition early in the day, when the fate of the respective battles was still undecided, a similar situation may possibly recur, and thus offer brilliant opportunities to an enterprising cavalry leader.

* It was at this time that Moreau, who was riding with the Emperor Alexander of Russia, was mortally wounded by a cannon-ball, which carried off his legs and killed the horse he was riding.



THE WESTERN SIDE OF THE BATTLE-FIELD OF DRESDEN,
AUGUST 27TH, 1813.

(To face p. 98.

No. VI.

WACHAU (NEAR LEIPSIC),

16th October, 1813.

No. VI.

WACHAU (NEAR LEIPSIC), 16*th October*, 1813.

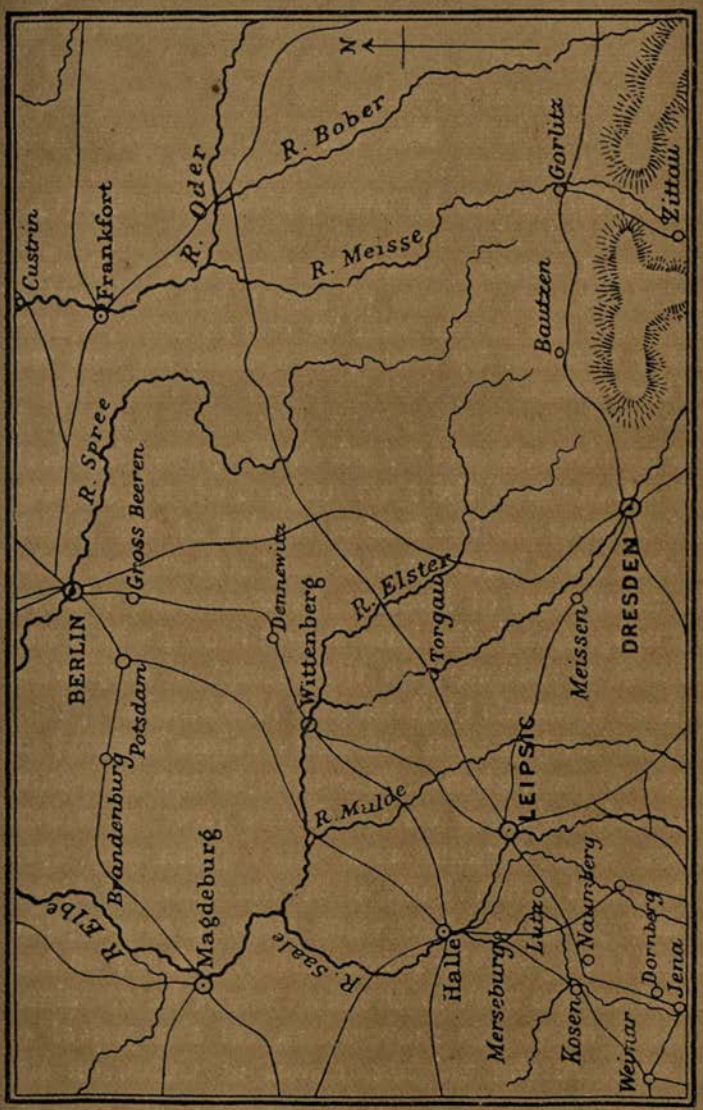
Six thousand cavalry, under the command of General Prince Murat, capture 26 guns; but for want of Supports are driven back by one regiment, which, being followed by others, recaptures all but two of the cannon.

IN the previous chapter we left the Emperor Napoleon on the afternoon of the 27th August, when his troops were following up the beaten armies of the Allies. Next day, after lunching at Pirna,* a town ten miles to the South-east of Dresden, he was seized with an attack of spasms in the bowels—an illness which was coincident, moreover, with the receipt of dispiriting news from Generals Oudinot and Macdonald.

The former had been defeated at Gros Beeren † on the 23rd August, when endeavouring to occupy Berlin. Macdonald, surprised on the Bober river by Prince Blucher, after fighting two days (26th and 27th August), had fallen back with the loss of 25,000 men and 30 guns. Nor were these the only misfortunes falling on the French army. Napoleon had returned on the 28th to Dresden, where he remained undecided as to his movements, till the arrival of fugitives from the neighbourhood of Culm, on the afternoon of the 30th, made him aware of the capture

* See map, No. IX. † See map, No. XI.

of Vandamme, and the dispersion of his Army Corps.



No. XI.

THE COUNTRY NEAR LEIPSIC

He had been sent up through Königisten and Pirna

to endeavour to cut off the retreat of the Allies. It is alleged that when the Emperor returned to Dresden he gave an order for three divisions of the Young Guard to support the isolated Corps. It was then, however, too late, for after two days' fighting, Vandamme, held in front by General Osterman and 12,000 Russians, was taken in rear by the Allies retreating after the battle of Dresden, with the result that he, Generals Haxo and Guyot were taken prisoners, with 7000 of all other ranks, 3000 being killed. Thirty guns fell into the hands of the Allies, the remainder of the French Corps dispersing.

During the month of September the position of Napoleon on the Elbe was like that of a stag at bay, when surrounded by adversaries who advance and retire alternately as the still formidable antagonist changes his front. Both Blucher, at the head of the Prussians, and Schwarzenberg, at the head of the Austrians and Russians, came forward in turn, and then retreated as Napoleon took the offensive against each successively. Moreover, General Ney, who had replaced Oudinot, was heavily defeated by Bernadotte at Dennewitz on the 6th September, and retreated to Torgau, after losing 13,000 men, several "Eagles," and cannons.

The Allies now determined to unite the armies of Blucher and Bernadotte, and to advance on Leipsic from the Northward, while the Austrians and Russians moved by the Chemnitz road to the same point. On the 23rd September, a reinforcement of 50,000 Russians having arrived from Poland, the movement was commenced. Napoleon then marched against Blucher, but he failed to check the enemy's advance, and on the 12th October, having been

deserted by the Bavarians, and hearing of Schwarzenberg's successful movement from Chemnitz, the Emperor countermarched his troops to Leipsic.

It was not, however, without great reluctance that he relinquished his intention of reoccupying Berlin. Caulaincourt, in his "Recollections," writes: "When the intentions of the Emperor to cross the Elbe and carry the war into Prussia became known, there was a general explosion of murmurs in the army. The Staff came in a body to the Emperor to supplicate him to abandon his projects on Berlin, and march on Leipsic." Napoleon was unconvinced by their arguments; but realizing that he was almost the only individual in the whole army who wished to continue the campaign, he yielded, though against his own convictions, and gave up his plan, which he still thought offered the best chance of success.

Before I endeavour to describe what took place on the 16th October, it may be well to recall the state, both moral and physical, of the contending forces. The Allies were by this time well equipped and provisioned by help of English subsidies, granted to the extent of over five millions sterling. They suffered, indeed, from the divided command, the inconveniences of which were considerable, notwithstanding that Prince Schwarzenberg held the position of Commander-in-chief of the whole forces. On the other hand, all their troops were well clothed and fed, animated by the best military spirit, and the desire to drive the French back across the Rhine.

Napoleon's troops, on the contrary, were harassed by incessant marches and countermarches, while neither he nor his Headquarter Staff made any attempt to ration either men or horses, excepting

those of the Imperial Guard. Even in this favoured force the continuous movements in the months of August and September deprived the soldiers of the advantages they had hitherto enjoyed, for it was impossible for the Commissariat to keep them supplied. Except in the Guard, each Army Corps commander was held responsible for the feeding of his soldiers, and this system, although wasteful, is practicable when troops are marching continuously forward through a rich and populous country. For many months however, Saxony had been overrun by its Allies and enemies, and, as the French troops were seldom rationed, not only were dreadful excesses committed, but many suffered from absolute starvation. Want of food, and the scenes of pillage which resulted therefrom, gradually broke down the discipline of the army. Even under the windows of the houses where Napoleon was lodged the troops tore down window-shutters and doors for their bivouac fires, and the expression, "the fortune of war," was taken to excuse every sort of outrage. Great as were the sufferings of the Rank and File in the months of August and September, they were intensified as the country became still more impoverished, and the weather became inclement.

The misery inflicted on the friendly inhabitants of the country passes beyond description. For the immediate headquarters of the Emperor Napoleon, all supplies were paid for in cash; but this good example was not followed by several of the Marshals commanding Army Corps, whose conduct in living by "Requisition" provoked comment, not only from the inhabitants, but also amongst the French officers themselves. All the towns around the city of

Dresden had been exhausted by the numbers of men and horses, which for months had been living on the country. Napoleon endeavoured, indeed, to procure subsistence for the sick and wounded in the hospitals, but only a small percentage of the supplies which he ordered up from France actually reached those for whom they were intended, and thus starvation had to be faced both by the sick and wounded, who were in need of every comfort to prolong their lives, as well as by the soldiers who were still with the Colours. An eye-witness, D'Odeleben, mentions that the small town of Pirna, then containing less than 4000 inhabitants, and which had been occupied by the contending forces alternately for many weeks, was ordered by the French Staff, in the latter part of September, to furnish 6000 rations daily.

It is doubtful whether the French troops quartered in Dresden, or those billeted in the surrounding villages, underwent the greater privations. In the country a two-roomed cottage for one family had generally a company, approximately 100 men, allotted to it. The city contained 15,000 men in hospitals, and its sanitary condition may be imagined from the statement quoted by Sir Archibald Alison, that in the six months from 15th June to the 15th November, 5,062,000 soldiers were billeted in the city and its suburbs, *i.e.* passed one night in it. This enormous number is accounted for by the frequent passage of the large armies through its gates.

The soldiers exposed to the elements seized on everything which they could convert into firewood; thus all the wooden houses were pulled down, the timber was taken from the roofs of the stone buildings, the crucifixes in the vineyards, on the cross roads, and

in the cemeteries, were utilized for the same purpose, and even coffins were dug up to serve for the bivouac fires, their ghastly contents being scattered around. The asylum near Pirna was evacuated to be transformed into a fort, and the unfortunate lunatics were dispersed without any arrangements being made for their preservation.

All this misery acted and reacted on the French troops. None of the Corps, with the exception of the Imperial Guard, any longer greeted the Emperor with the enthusiastic shouts with which his approach had been acclaimed in previous campaigns. Discipline, in the proper sense of the term, ceased to exist, and although the Emperor issued the most stringent orders to prevent the universal pillage which was being carried on, directing that marauders, when taken, should be "decimated," yet the evil had gone too far to be arrested by even such drastic measures. It may be accepted as an undoubted fact that the provisioning of armies by means of cash payments is, irrespective of any question of Right or Wrong, by far the cheapest and most effectual means of providing them with food.

I have dwelt on the state of the troops generally, because what affected the infantry, affected similarly the Arm of the service with which I am immediately concerned. Even the most highly trained horsemen become useless if their steeds are insufficiently nourished, and to supply sufficient provender had for a long time been impossible. D'Odeleben mentions that there was not a vestige of forage obtainable for the horses around Dresden in the latter part of September; stackyards had been cleared out, and the cavalry could only be fed by spreading it far and wide.

It is clear, moreover, that the Mounted branches of the Service had never been properly reorganized since the disaster of 1812 (Russia), which practically annihilated this Arm. Throughout the campaign of 1813 we find the same complaints. Napoleon one day reproached General Sebastiani for allowing his men to become a rabble. Sebastiani had the courage to flatly contradict the Emperor, and point out that the expression was unjust, in that it was impossible to have an efficient cavalry force when neither men nor horses received rations. Apart, however, from this essential condition of efficiency, we have Marmont's own description of the want of training of his mounted troops; and, indeed, when we consider that their numbers had been increased, between the date of the battle of Lutzen, in May, and those fought in October, from zero to 76,000, we shall realize the justice of his observations.

The Marshal writes: "I was joined by General Latour-Maubourg and his cavalry, but, being quite raw and uninstructed, they were of no use;" and again, somewhat later, he writes: "The cavalry has never really been got together." It is easy to explain why it should have been so. The best horsemasters—and Frenchmen, with all their military instincts, cannot be reckoned amongst the best—would have failed to accomplish in five months of successive marching and counter-marching, what we all now believe requires three years with careful instructors; but such teachers were not available. There were very few squadron leaders of experience remaining, and the young subalterns brought from the depôts were totally incapable of training either men or horses. It thus came about that this Arm of the service could

only be used in masses, under the direction of tried and capable generals. I gather that regiments seldom, or never, deployed, in our sense of the word, and certainly in many cases, as at Wachau, they charged in quarter column.* Napoleon had done everything he could accomplish as regards supplying equipment. New saddlery had been obtained, but there was never sufficient time to fit it, and sore backs were of common occurrence. One officer who served in the campaign declares it was possible, by the smell of festered sores, to tell when a body of approaching cavalry was a newly formed corps. As a German writer, D'Odeleben, who is praised by the French for his impartiality, observes: "Napoleon did wonders by appealing to the honour, and love of country, of the young soldiers, who responded courageously in carrying out his orders on the battle-field, but it was impossible to appeal either to the vanity, or desire for glory, of the unfortunate horses," which were no sooner requisitioned from the farmers of Saxony and brought into the ranks than they were called upon to carry their riders in a charge.

Moreover, the Emperor's capacity in this campaign had begun to fail, and, like other men under overwhelming misfortune, he had lost confidence in his own judgment. He now sought counsel from some of the Marshals who had gone through so many campaigns with him. One conversation he had with Marmont lasted more than five hours; beginning at 11 p.m., it was continued till breakfast was served, at 6 o'clock the following morning. The Emperor's habits were

* "Quarter column"—a formation in which squadrons were placed on parallel and successive alignments, at a distance from each other equal to one-fourth of their frontage.

formed entirely for his own convenience, and without any consideration for the health of his subordinates. After a march, as soon as a house or tent was prepared for him, he would go to bed frequently at six or seven in the evening, with orders to be awakened when the reports of the day's proceedings were received. These were generally brought in between 9 and 11 p.m., when he would send for one or more of the Marshals quartered near him, and keep them up for many hours discussing plans for the future.

During the night of the 14th–15th October, he called into his room at Reudnitz—a village two miles to the Southward of Leipsic—Berthier, Murat, Marmont, and several other generals, and leaning against the stove in the middle of the room, had a long and interesting conversation with them. He was urging the adoption of two ranks* for infantry, in order that he might impose on the enemy as to his available numbers. During this conversation Marshal Augereau entered the room, having just arrived, after making a forced march. "Ah! here you are at last, my old Augereau!" the Emperor cried; and then went on to say, "But you are no longer the Augereau of Castiglione!"† "Yes I am," replied the Marshal. "You will find I am just the same Augereau I was at Castiglione if you will give me the same sort of soldiers I led in Italy."

Napoleon then observed, but without irritation, that every one around him had "slacked off" (to use

* On the Continent the ranks in the companies up to that date stood three deep; but on the 18th October the two-deep formation was adopted.

† The Emperor alluded to the brilliant victory won on the 5th August, 1796, by the Marshal, who defeated the Austrian army, commanded by General Wurmser, inflicting on it great loss.

a Naval term); and he ran through a series of names, including those of his brothers, down to Murat, finishing up his arguments, as he eventually left the room, by bidding his companions an affectionate "good night," and warning them that they would have to fight hard on the morrow. The Emperor realized that his Marshals were no longer animated by the same desire to fight as formerly, while they, on their part, could not but be painfully aware that he had expended the manhood of France, and was no longer the same Soldier that he had proved himself to be when, as First Consul, he led small armies to victory in Italy.

The outlook for the morrow was not promising. Marches and counter-marches, and the combats of the previous week, had rendered 20,000 men non-effective; there were 30,000 locked up in Dresden, and the 360,000 available in Germany, two months earlier, had sunk to about half that number. It is difficult to state accurately the numbers of the opposing armies. Vaudoncourt gives them as 349,000 Allies, of whom 54,000 were horsemen; and 156,000 under Napoleon's command, of whom 23,000 were cavalry soldiers.

There were on the 16th October two distinct battles, one fought at Möckern, three miles North of Leipsic, and the other at Wachau, three miles South of the city, and minor engagements at Connewitz and Lindenau, to the Westward, on the Pleisse river. This peculiar situation arose from the Allies closing round the French forces, much in the same manner as happened fifty-seven years later at Sedan.

Colonel Aster, to whose account * of the details

* "Die Gefechte und Schlacten bei Leipsic," 1813.

I am greatly indebted, divides the battle of the 16th at Wachau into four different periods; but the incidents which I have to narrate occurred in the second and third periods, *i.e.* between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m.

*Description of Ground.**—The rivers Elster and Pleisse, which flow, for many miles from their sources, only a short distance apart, until they run into the Saale, form a peculiar feature in the ground to the South and West of Leipsic. A traveller going Southwards from that city, sees a succession of undulating hills, rising one above the other as far as the Galgenberg (Gallows Hill), which is situated about midway between Liebertwolkwitz and Wachau. There is not sufficient difference in the height of any of the hills to afford a distant view, and thus Napoleon, when attacking Gossa, soon after 3 p.m., was unable to see the Russian Reserves coming up. The highest parts of the hills vary from 30 to 150 feet above the level of the river, the culminating ridge running from East to West, and the undulating crests being separated by intervening hollows. From Liebertwolkwitz, extending down to Mark-Kleeberg on the Pleisse, there is a marked, though slight, depression of the ground, draining the surrounding country towards the river. This gentle valley, which separated the opposing forces on the morning of the 16th October, was the scene of terrible slaughter for many hours, as the combatants passed and repassed through it with alternating success. The slopes of the hills are generally gentle, 6 degrees being an average gradient, but in one or two places there are slopes of from 10 to 15 degrees. The intervening depressions of the ground were dotted with underwood and timber,

* See map at end of chapter.

the valleys being deepest towards the Pleisse. In 1813 there were pools in many of these hollows, drained either naturally or artificially by ditches running down to the river. Around the pools, which in most cases have since been drained, the meadow land was generally swampy, and after heavy rain barely passable for infantry, and impassable for mounted men. The soil over which the cavalry of my tale worked is loam and clay, and was therefore very slippery and difficult of foothold after the constant wet weather of the preceding month. The two main roads running to Grimma and Borna were metalled, the others being mere cart-tracks. In the bottoms of the valleys numerous ditches, although of no great depth, impeded cavalry. The rivers Pleisse and Elster, although not broad, were deep, and so muddy at the bottom as to render them practically unfordable for mounted troops. The villages, churches, cemeteries, and farms, all favoured defensive tactics, and were used with great advantage by the Allied troops. The ground is more open and favourable for cavalry to the East of Liebertwolkwitz, and the "University wood," but the operations there do not affect the story of that part of the battle to which my selected incidents belong.

The Emperor Napoleon had intended to take the initiative and attack the Allies at 7 a.m.; indeed, he himself mounted his horse near the sheep-farm of Meusdorf soon after daylight. The orders which he had issued late over-night had not, however, been sent out in time to enable his troops to reach their assigned positions, and as my narrative is primarily connected with the operations of cavalry, which took

place in the forenoon and afternoon, to the Westward of the University wood, it will be sufficient for my purpose if I state generally the positions occupied by the French at 11 a.m., as between 9 and 11 a.m. the infantry were only getting into the positions they held during the charges of cavalry.

The 8th Army Corps, commanded by Poniatowski, stood, at 11 a.m., between Mark Kleeberg and Connewitz; the 9th (Augereau), to the South-east of Dösen, facing towards Wachau; the 4th and 5th cavalry Corps (Letort and Pajol), a little to the East of the 9th Army Corps; the 2nd Army Corps (Victor), to the North of Wachau; the 5th (Lauriston), between Wachau and Liebertwolkwitz; the 11th (Macdonald) came, somewhat later, into position on the left of the 5th Corps; the 2nd cavalry Corps was still on the march towards Klein Pösnau; the 1st cavalry Corps (Latour-Maubourg), having marched, at 7 a.m., from Schöenfield, about 10 miles, after its arrival stood to the North of Wachau; the Guards, both cavalry and infantry, were about Meusdorf, except that the 3rd and 4th divisions of the Young Guard were, at 11 a.m., advancing towards Wachau.

The Emperor had hoped Ney might be able to send him the 3rd and 6th Army Corps, but this became impossible, as Marmont's Corps was required for the fight at Mockern, and the 3rd (Souham's), which Ney sent to help Napoleon, spent the day marching between the two battle-fields, and was therefore never utilized.

While the French troops were still on the march, at 9 o'clock, the Allies commenced the attack. Prince Schwarzenberg's dispositions were faulty, inasmuch as

he had arranged to operate with the Austrians between the rivers Pleisse and Elster, where no decisive result could have been obtained. The Prussian and Russian troops, already in position at 9 o'clock, under General Count Wittgenstein, were formed into four columns between Fuchshain on the East, and Gröbern on the West. Count Pahlen, with 3000 cavalry, mainly Russian, was posted between the University wood and Güldengossa; and behind the extreme left of the Prussian infantry, under General Kleit, stood Lewachoff's Russian Cuirassier brigade, and the Lubno regiment of Hussars. These troopers were the first to obtain some success over the French, as I shall presently describe.

The Monarchs in command of the opposing armies took up their positions at 9 o'clock, Napoleon on the Galgenberg, and the Allied Sovereigns on the hill mid-way between Göhren and Güldengossa, protected by an escort of the regiment of the "Red Cossacks of the Guard" formed up under cover to the South of the hill. The Allied column, commanded by Prince Eugene of Wurtemberg, attacking Wachau, covered by the fire of 48 guns, had at first some success, and seized that village; but the assailants were overwhelmed by the projectiles of 60 guns, which Napoleon had caused to be placed on the Galgenberg ridge. These batteries, subsequently increased to 100 guns, and later in the day to 150, poured forth such a terrible fire on the village and the batteries near it, that 22 guns were immediately dismounted, and the Allied infantry, breaking, fled in confusion.

Two battalions of Prussians re-entered Wachau about 9.30, and later Klenau's Prussians and Gortschakoff's Russians seized Liebertwolkwitz; but neither

of these columns could remain in the villages under the destructive fire of Druot's guns. The latter village was stormed six times, but remained in the hands of the French, although the struggle was continued up to 11 a.m. with varying success; from that hour, till after 3 o'clock, the battle ceased between Wachau and Liebertwolkwitz. The Allies were, however, more successful in their attack on Mark Kleeberg. The French at first successfully defended the village, but when a battalion of Austrian infantry crossed the Pleisse, a little to the North of it, the French fell back, taking shelter under some oak trees immediately to the North-east of the hamlet. A regiment of Polish cavalry now caught the pursuing infantry in flank, and made many prisoners; and the French infantry, thus encouraged, retook the village.

Soon afterwards, the Prussian infantry obtained possession of the low ground immediately East of Mark Kleeberg, whence they opened fire on the French artillery in its main position. While this attack was going on, a Russian column advanced and drove the French infantry from the water meadows lying between Wachau and Mark Kleeberg, but then, coming under the fire of Druot's guns, suffered severely. There was now a broad gap between the third and fourth columns of the Allies, and the danger appeared so imminent that the Emperor Alexander ordered the 3rd division of Cuirassiers, under General Duca, to Magdeborn, and sent to Schwarzenberg to urge him to divert the Austrian troops, operating between the two rivers, to the Eastward in support of the Prussian and Russian columns.

I pass over the operations of the columns which attacked Liebertwolkwitz, and will content myself

with stating the result. After several hours' furious fighting, the French held their own; and it became apparent to the commanders on both sides that, unless the Allies could be reinforced, they must be defeated.

The Staff officer sent by the Emperor of Russia reached Prince Schwarzenberg at Gautzsch about 10.30 a.m.; but it is doubtful whether he would even then have given up his own plan had he not been urged by his Chief of the Staff, and, indeed, all the officers around him, to go to the assistance of the Russians. Eventually the Commander-in-Chief decided to turn the heads of his Austrian columns Eastwards, and he ordered that a passage over the Pleisse should be forced at Dolitz, while two divisions, followed by the Reserve, should cross at Gröbern; and he sent orders to General Count Nostitz to move his cavalry division in advance of the infantry over the same bridges.

Meanwhile the Allied Sovereigns, recognizing the critical state of affairs in their front, had ordered up all available cavalry to hold the ground between Güldengossa and Magdeborn, as also all the available Prussian and Russian reserves.

I stated above that the French, encouraged by the charges of the Polish brigade 4th cavalry Corps, had recaptured the Northern portion of Mark Kleeberg; but the squadrons, coming under heavy artillery and infantry fire, eventually fell back. This induced a fresh advance of Prussian infantry, and the French, when retiring, were obliged to leave a battery on the ground, all the horses having been killed. The forward movement of the Prussian infantry led to repeated charges and counter-charges of cavalry, for the Polish Lancers, who were supported by French

squadrons, made three separate attacks, and when riding at the infantry were met by the regiment of Russian Hussars. The Prussian infantry got into squares, and managed to beat off both the Polish and French cavalry. The Russian horsemen, although inferior in numbers, devoted themselves freely in support of the infantry of their Allies.

General Lewachoff's Charge.—While this struggle was going on, General Lewachoff approached with the 6th Cuirassier brigade. His task was difficult. Two French battalions stood in squares near the edge of the higher ground. A shower of projectiles from Druot's guns in position on the Galgenberg fell on the right flank of the Cuirassiers, while further back stood a part of the 4th French cavalry Corps. Lewachoff crossed the intervening hollow ground, and, forming up on the far side, made two separate attacks on Milhaud's division of cavalry, and Poniatowski's infantry. Lewachoff pushed home his charge, however, in spite of all opposition; and it is said that many of the infantry had their hands cut off at the wrists, while holding their muskets at the "head parry." Riding steadily on, the Russians came on 20 French cannons between the "Wine Pond" and Dösen. The drivers had disappeared with the limbers, and the guns were found entirely deserted. The Emperor Napoleon himself had to ride back Northwards to escape being captured. A division of infantry of the Guard, the 2nd brigade of the cavalry of the Guard, and Bercheim's mixed cavalry brigade, were now sent to the assistance of the 4th cavalry Corps. Lewachoff, then reforming his squadrons, though suffering heavy losses, retired, in as good order as if engaged in a "peace" manœuvre, across the hollow

ground. The opposing forces now drew back to either crest overlooking the valley, while the artillery continued their duel.

Meanwhile the fight was proceeding on the Eastern side of the battle-field. Between 11 a.m. and noon General Macdonald, with the 11th Army Corps, pushed back Klenau's Corps of Austrians, and captured some guns on the Kolmberg, from which position the Austrian artillery retired hurriedly. This success enabled Napoleon to advance his Centre, which, preceded by Druot's guns, at that hour 84 in number, formed in one grand battery, gradually gained ground Southwards, and about 2 p.m. it became obvious that a heavy attack on the Allied position between the Auenhein sheep-farm and Güldengossa was imminent. It was at this time that the Saxon Cuirassier brigade (von Zastrow), which till now had been standing to the North of Wachau under heavy artillery fire from Gortschakoff's and the Duke of Würtemberg's guns, was sent to join Bercheim's cavalry brigade near Dösen. The Cuirassiers, in order to avoid the abandoned French battery mentioned above, passed close to the village, and proceeding on about 400 yards, they had just deployed on the edge of the higher ground on which the French stood when they were called into action, as I shall show presently.

Charge of the 4th (French) Cavalry Corps.—General Letort,* with the 4th cavalry Corps, composed of a division of Polish cavalry and the Dragoons of the Guard, had been reinforced by a part of the 5th cavalry Corps, and supported by lines of infantry formed in battalion squares, was, at this hour—*i.e.*

* General Kellerman, its commander, was sick.

2 p.m.—following up the retreating Prussian squares with the intention of overwhelming them, and of attacking the two divisions of the Russian Grenadier Guards, which were formed in a line of columns behind the Auenhein sheep-farm and Güldengossa, the line of columns being extended Eastwards of that point towards the University wood.

Charge of the Austrian Cuirassier Division under General Count Nostitz.—I must now return to the Austrian side. Three hours previously—*i.e.* about 11 a.m.—General Nostitz received, while at Gautzsch, permission from Field-marshal Schwarzenberg to move Eastwards, and support the Centre. There was great delay in crossing the bridge over the Pleisse and in passing through the village of Gröbern, and though the General, having himself ridden forward, saw, from the vicinity of that hamlet, the critical condition of the Allies, and sent back orders for his regiments to hurry up, it was nevertheless 2 p.m. before they came into action. General Lewachoff's three regiments had just at this time been badly defeated. His brigade, proud of its success gained in the earlier part of the fight, had gallantly galloped at General Letort's heavy masses of cavalry in order to arrest their onward march. The conflict, however, was too unequal to render success possible, and the brave Russian Cuirassiers were hustled back towards Güldengossa, their retreat being harassed by the fire of the long line of batteries, for on the French position there were now 300 guns in action. It was at this moment that the leading squadrons of Count Nostitz' division came on the ground. It was composed of 7 superb regiments of steel-clad Cuirassiers, numbering

36 squadrons, but had only one Horse battery with it, as the other two had been left on the Western side of the Pleisse.

The greater portion of the division headed directly Eastward, while the Sommariva regiment (Cuirassiers) turned Northwards towards Mark Kleeberg. As the mass of horsemen emerged from Gröbern, trotting on without any advanced guard, the head of the column rode into a crowd of Russian cavalry and infantry retreating in disorder before the 4th French cavalry Corps, and consequently the two leading squadrons of the Archduke Albrecht's regiment were carried away in the rush of men and horses hurrying Southwards. The rear wing of the regiment, however, got close up to the French cavalry before it was noticed, and then the hesitation which ensued on the part of the foe, when this movement on the flank was perceived, gave time to the second regiment—*i.e.* the Lothringen—to deploy. It immediately afterwards closed with the front of the French dragoons of the Guard, and on the flank of a regiment of Polish cavalry. Into the front ranks of this latter the rear wing of the Archduke Albrecht's regiment, led by General Count Nostitz, who was wounded in the encounter, charged at the same moment. The 4th French cavalry Corps, thus assailed in front and flank, was routed, and falling back in disorder to the North of Wachau, was followed up by the Lothringen Cuirassiers, until they reached the Young Guard, some of whom were ridden down. Now, however, more French cavalry appeared, and the Lothringen Cuirassiers, attacked in front and flank by horsemen, and assailed from behind by the fire of infantry from Wachau, and also from others posted in a hollow road near the village, turned, and

were driven Southwards, being pursued by the French squadrons across the valley and up the Southern slope of ground. Again the scene changed, for the Austrian brigade Taxis here came into action, and in its turn drove back the pursuing French regiments. There were now several attacks and counter-attacks delivered, but the Austrian squadrons, being strongly reinforced, eventually hurled back the 4th Corps, and held it for several hours to the Northward of Wachau.

I will now relate what happened to the Sommariva Cuirassiers, who, having cleared the bridge at Gröbern, "changed direction" to the left, and moved Northwards towards Mark Kleeberg. As they approached the village they were led by their colonel, von Auserwald, against a regiment of the 4th French cavalry Corps. This was pushed back, and the fight on the ground between Mark Kleeberg and Wachau now degenerated into a series of squadron encounters, with alternating success. In these charges and counter-charges, all consideration of Front and Rear was ignored, and while part of the French were victorious in the front of their line of battle, Austrian squadrons were driving back other portions of the 4th cavalry Corps far in the rear of the French position. Eventually, however, the French lost ground, and this in spite of the heroic conduct of their leaders. Brigadier-general Bercheim, whose head-dress had been knocked off by a sabre cut, leading in front of the 2nd brigade of the Guard cavalry, galloped bareheaded into the thickest part of the Austrian squadrons. These were, however, too strong to be successfully assailed, and the gallant general was eventually swept away Northwards by a crowd of flying horsemen.

The fugitives avoided the village of Dösen, and in doing so collided with the advancing Saxon Cuirassier regiment (von Zastrow). These squadrons, as I mentioned above, had been standing for some hours to the North of Liebertwolkwitz, under the converging fire of all the guns of Wurtemberg's and Gortschakoff's batteries, many of which, being over-aimed at Druot's line of cannons, struck down both men and horses further back; but, unshaken by the sight of the disaster and the hurried retreat of the flying horsemen, the Saxons rode perfectly steady in the ranks, opening out only sufficiently to allow the fugitives to pass through; and then, closing their intervals and increasing the pace, they galloped determinedly against the Sommariva Cuirassiers. The Austrians shouted to the Saxons to join as friends, but the only reply was the command "Charge," and the opposing forces collided with great force. Both sides fought gallantly for a time, but the Saxons, being hopelessly outnumbered, were after a time completely routed, and at last, turning, fled. Friends and foes now galloped Northwards in inextricable confusion. A ditch which the Saxon squadrons had crossed easily during their advance, caused a check, and the Austrians, closing in, slaughtered a great number of their foes, von Zastrow's regiment losing during the day two-thirds of its effectives. The pursuit was carried on towards Prostheida, till a French battalion, standing firm by its fire, arrested the pursuit. The French cavalry then immediately faced about, and captured nearly a squadron of the foremost Austrian horsemen.

This event gave rise to the exhibition of a fine trait on the part of a French non-commissioned officer. An

impetuous young Saxon prince, serving in the French army as a Staff officer, and who had previously distinguished himself during the Russian campaigns of 1812, being greatly excited by the hand-to-hand fight in which he had taken part, struck at an Austrian prisoner. A French quartermaster-sergeant at once intervened, and, riding up, threatened to cut the prince down unless he immediately desisted from maltreating an unarmed man.

The Emperor, who from the vicinity of Druot's combined batteries had witnessed the overthrow of Letort's cavalry Corps (the 4th), galloped back for safety to the Old Guard, which he led forward formed in square. All the Austrian squadrons now retired to Gröbern, which they were obliged to hold to enable their infantry to cross over the Pleisse. They sat steadily on their horses, though the loss inflicted by the French artillery was great, and the single battery belonging to Nostitz's division was soon destroyed. It does not appear that the other two batteries ever got into action.

While these encounters of cavalry were in progress, Victor's Army Corps, and the 3rd and 4th divisions of the Young Guard, were struggling bravely, though for some time ineffectually, to gain possession of the Auenhein sheep-farm building, and the fight of the opposing infantry at Mark Kleeberg never ceased.

Soon after 3 p.m. Napoleon's preparations for attacking the centre of the Allied line were completed. From the Liebertwolkwitz hill he had clearly seen the weak spot in the Allied line, *i.e.* the intervals between Wittgenstein's columns on the ground between the University wood, and Güldengossa. This was held early in the morning by Count Pahlen's

cavalry, but the horsemen were now drawn further back to the Southward; for when, about 2 p.m., Klenau's attack on the left of the French failed, he retired. His retirement obliged Prince Gortschakoff to conform; and before the French advanced for the grand attack, undertaken by the 1st and part of the 5th cavalry Corps, which I am about to describe, the Russian infantry had been repulsed, and were holding only the edge of the University wood and Güldengossa. Count Pahlen, who was keeping up the communication between the columns, drew back also, and his troops, though not actually engaged until nearly 4 o'clock, had been exposed for many hours to a heavy fire.

Latour-Maubourg's Corps, which had been standing North of Wachau and Liebertwolkwitz, was now joined by a division of the 5th cavalry Corps. The 5 divisions (4 of Latour-Maubourg's, comprising 10 Cuirassier regiments, and 1 of the Dragoons of Spain) were formed in lines of columns; and while Murat, escaping untouched, lived to cause, by his thoughtless courage, the disaster, the two Corps were each unfortunate in the loss of their commanders before the actual collision took place.

The cavalry of the Guard was drawn up in rear of the 1st Corps, the heads of the columns of which were formed upon the rising ground between the Galgenberg and the Wachau village, on a frontage of 600 yards, facing South-south-west. To cavalry officers of the present day such a deep formation must appear to be almost impossible; but we know, from the statement of Lieutenant Baron von Firks, of the Prussian Field artillery, who was lying wounded on the ground South of Wachau, that he counted 10 lines

of columns pass him on this narrow frontage. The duty assigned to the French cavalry was, primarily, the capture of the great Russian battery in action on the rising ground midway between Güldengossa and Wachau, and also of a battery of 12 pieces somewhat further to the North. Having silenced these pieces, they were to attack the Russian infantry, and then, pressing on, to break the centre of the Allied position near Güldengossa. The Saxon Cuirassier Guards were detailed to seize a battery in the hollow immediately South of Wachau, which was, however, now supported by 6 battalions of the division Klux, standing in square.

When we turn for a moment to the Allied side, we should note there was an open drain running down from Güldengossa towards the Pleisse. The banks of the drain were swampy, and thus it was difficult to cross it low down, except by the causeways which had been made for farm purposes; but close to Güldengossa the ditch was so small that it ceased to be an obstacle. Besides the Allied batteries, and Klux's division, there stood between Auenhein and to the North of Güldengossa 12 battalions formed in squares. They had suffered terribly from the artillery fire, which had been poured on them for many hours, and it is stated that many battalions had lost more than half their numbers before they were assailed by the French cavalry.

Characteristics of the French Cavalry Generals.—Before attempting to describe the incidents attendant on the example cited at the head of this chapter, it may be well to show how unfortunate the French were in the casualties among their leaders, because

two men of daring courage, and yet of calm judgment, having been struck down, the attack passed under the sole direction of Murat, whose reckless bravery was not balanced by military knowledge, or capacity. Accounts differ as to the time at which Latour-Maubourg, struck by a cannon shot, lost his leg, some placing it as early as the opening of the battle at 9 a.m., and others much later. It is, however, certain that he was wounded so early in the battle as to prevent his exercising any influence in the unfortunate attack made by the 1st cavalry Corps, which went forward under the command of General Bordesoule.

General Count Pajol conducted the charge which resulted in the temporary capture of the Allies' guns immediately to the South of Wachau, and was not wounded until after a part of the 5th Corps, under his command, had achieved some success, having captured the big battery. He then halted his squadrons until he could make sure of the nature of the ground in front, and on the return of his aide-de-camp, who reported that, immediately North of Gossa, the swampy meadows rendered the movements of cavalry difficult, Pajol spoke to the King of Naples, who then galloped away to the Eastward. Prince Murat had only got a few yards away when Pajol's horse and its rider were struck by a projectile which threw them up several feet in the air. Murat being informed of this misfortune, then determined that he would lead the cavalry himself. How by his reckless bravery he induced the disaster I shall endeavour presently to show. Count Pajol was succeeded by General Milhaud.

Murat escaped without a scratch, but only to perish miserably two years later in Italy, meeting his fate,

however, with the same undaunted courage which he had shown during the whole of his brillant service under his brother-in-law Napoleon. To give even a sketch of his numberless daring acts is impossible in this article, but I state briefly an incident which shows the nature of his character.

After an engagement which took place near Dresden on the 8th September, in which Napoleon drove back the enemy, General Pajol was, at the close of the day, following up the foe with a handful of cavalry. A squadron of the 14th Hussars was leading in the pursuit of the enemy, whose retreat was covered by a large body of Prussian cavalry, which General Count Pajol was trying to outflank. It happened that the Emperor, accompanied by Murat, passed by, and Murat, seeing the squadron of the 14th Hussars, called out that it ought to charge. "No," said Napoleon. "Leave Pajol alone; he knows what to do." And the two monarchs rode on. Presently, however, Murat came back alone, and insisted that the squadron should charge. Pajol begged him to wait until two regiments he had already put in motion had turned the flank of the retreating rear-guard; but Murat insisted on having his own way, and the captain of the squadron was ordered to advance, being supported by a company of infantry in skirmishing order. As Marshal St. Cyr writes: "It is impossible to guess what made Murat give such a foolish order, and it appeared that he did not know himself." The squadron consisted of recruits on remounts; once extended in a gallop they lost all control of their horses, and riding headlong into a regiment, were cut to pieces, the captain and trumpeter only returning safe. Murat, in order

to cover up his mistake, and to silence the squadron leader, asked for and obtained his promotion.

But the prince was guilty of a still more unfortunate error near Liebertwolkwitz two days before the battle of Wachau. He had in hand, when he was attacked on the 14th, 5 divisions, 3 French and 2 Polish—one of the latter consisting of one brigade only. His command was made up of Letort's * (the 4th) cavalry Corps, who commanded it temporarily in the absence of Kellerman, who was sick, and one division of the 5th, led by Pajol, who performed prodigies of valour on this occasion, as also in the action near Wachau, when he had only a part of his command in hand, the remainder being near the river Pleisse.

The 5th Corps was composed of three divisions, one of Light cavalry under Subervie, and two of Dragoons under L'Heritier and Milhaud, the Dragoons having gained a great reputation both in Spain and in their recent operations against the Prussian partisan Corps, which were endeavouring to intercept the French communications between the Elbe and the Rhine. These two divisions, called the Dragoons of Spain, were the only trained cavalry in the French army, and, unfortunately, they suffered heavily at the hands of the Allied cavalry on the 14th October. With these squadrons Murat charged again and again in the afternoon, generally at the head of one regiment, and sometimes at the head of a single squadron, but without any apparent plan of battle. Leading himself, with the most reckless courage, he incurred great personal risk, and narrowly escaped

* This officer was mortally wounded on the 15th June, 1815, in breaking a square near Gosselies, when, leading 4 squadrons of Napoleon's escort, he endeavoured to cut off the retreat of the Prussian rear-guard.

with his life, being saved only by an orderly following him, who killed a Prussian officer as he was on the point of cutting down the prince.

I will now resume my narrative by describing the charge of the 1st and 5th cavalry Corps. The concentration of troops on the Galgenberg indicated clearly that an attack was impending, not only to the Staff of the Allied Sovereigns on the high ground, but also to the Duke of Wurtemberg, who, perceiving what was about to occur, sent orders to General Duca, then standing to the South-west of Auenhein, to bring up the 3rd Russian Cuirassier division; and to General Schwaiwitzsch, who, with the Body-Guard Hussars, Dragoons of the Guard, and Lancers of the Guard, was standing midway between the Westernmost pond of the Güldengossa hollow and Gröbern, to advance those regiments to the support of the infantry.

The Emperor of Russia, standing on the hill immediately South of Güldengossa, ordered up his Reserve artillery and Guards, but these were too late to prevent the capture of the Russian battery North of Güldengossa, though they assisted later, at least morally, in the discomfiture of Murat's squadrons. When the prince sounded the advance, as the great body moved forward at a slow trot, the earth shook under the weight of the horses, and this was the more remarked from the guns on both sides having ceased to fire. Murat rode in front of, and between, the 5th and the 1st cavalry Corps, having on his right the Saxon Guard cavalry, and on his left a brigade of French Cuirassiers formed of the 3rd and 6th regiments. As soon as the Saxons brought up their left shoulders to attack the battery South of Wachau, Murat led the

1st Corps, now commanded by Bordesoule. That general had, in the first instance, ordered General Bessières, who commanded a brigade composed of the 9th, 11th, and 12th Cuirassiers, to move to the Eastward in echelon with the principal column, and then to remain in support.

Bordesoule now sent General Sopranzi to attack the great Russian battery of 32 guns. The formation of the Saxon Guard cavalry, after going "Left Shoulders," was broken by its having to pass through a hollow road, and clumps of alder-wood bushes. Its movements were also inconvenienced by a battery of French Horse artillery, which had preceded the right of the cavalry in order to fire on the enemy preparatory to the attack, and having formed up on a slope on the South side of Wachau, was full in the line of advance of the Saxons as they "changed direction," and their right squadrons had, in consequence, to break off and reform. Although they were then moving only at the trot, this enforced increase of pace severely tried their steadiness, for the rear of the columns had to gallop, and while doing so the officer in command of the rear wing of the right regiment passed three battalions, but was uncertain whether they were friends or foes. The order having been given to attack the guns, he disregarded the infantry, and this accounts for the statement made by General Klux that the cavalry passed by him, but did not attack. The Russian artillerymen, for the most part, stood up well to their guns, but some of the batteries retired before the horsemen reached them, and the remainder were captured, in spite of a desperate charge made by Russian dragoons, who galloped up to assist their countrymen.

The Saxon squadrons now broke up, part of them going in pursuit of the retiring artillery, several guns of which were overtaken. The remainder of the Cuirassiers dismounted, and endeavoured to remove the captured pieces, which was a difficult task, for all the limbers had been driven away with the batteries which had retired. The Saxons, however, attempted to remove the guns by hand, and, some time later, were still thus occupied when Count Pahlen's squadrons, having rallied after their defeat by Bessières, as described lower down, advanced across the rear of Murat's command, and drove the Saxons back.

The 1st cavalry Corps, after its first advance, bringing up its left shoulder, inclined to the Westward, and then continued on towards Güldengossa, striking the line of battalion squares under command of Prince Eugene of Wurtemberg. The Russian infantry regiment Crementschuck had been standing 150 yards in rear of the artillery before the French squadrons came on. The 1st battalion was in the act of moving up to the batteries when it was caught, ridden down, and scattered, just as the whole of the remaining guns fell into the hands of the French. The officer commanding the battalion and many men were made prisoners, but the 2nd battalion stood firm, and in it was saved the Colour of the 1st battalion, which a Prussian Landwehr cavalry soldier, amidst all the confusion, carried to the intact battalion.

The first of the Allied cavalry to meet this rushing mass of horses, was the division under the command of General Schwaiwitzsch. He was killed, and the next senior officer, General Dawidow, lost both legs and an arm immediately afterwards. The division was not well handled, possibly from the loss of its

leaders. The flanks, galloping at speed, closed with the enemy before the centre, and the French, riding steadily on, repulsed the Russians. Then a dragoon regiment of General Duca's division, which was supported by some squadrons of lancers, attempted to check the attack. The dragoons were overwhelmed, many were killed, some were driven into the open drain, across which others escaped. The Lancers retired at the gallop towards Auenhein. The whole of the line of Russo-Prussian squares was now surrounded by crowds of French horsemen, and while the centre of the mass halted, the right flank squadrons spread over the ground far to the rear, but the surviving Allied infantry, nevertheless, remained erect and defiant.

When Murat, resuming the advance, left the captured guns, he rapidly increased the pace. He was well mounted, but the horses of those following him were exhausted by the previous hard work on very scanty rations. Latour-Maubourg's Corps had been manœuvring for some days under the orders of Murat, so as to support either of the French Army Corps which might be the most menaced by the concentric march of the Allies, and, as I showed above, only just reached Wachau in time for the battle. The horses were, therefore, in no condition for a prolonged gallop over heavy ground, and thus not only were regiments separated, the rear being unable to keep up, but individuals lost their places in the squadrons. Many horses fell in the shallow ditches; others, struck down by artillery fire, which had now been reopened, formed obstacles over which those coming on in rear fell, and thus the difficulties of the advance were constantly increasing. While the foremost horsemen, led by

Murat, were galloping wildly on, Count Pahlen ordered forward 10 squadrons of the Light cavalry of the Guard to the support of Wurtemberg's corps. General Bordesoule, seeing this advance, sent an order to General Bessières to hold two regiments in reserve, and to let one charge the Russian squadrons. Bessières, however, attacked with his whole brigade, and was at first brilliantly successful. He rode over Pahlen's squadrons, and then following in pursuit, and bringing up his left shoulder, got to within half a mile of the position where stood the Allied Sovereigns. Between the monarchs and the disordered but triumphant French Cuirassiers there was only the obstacle of a ditch, which, although impassable except by causeways lower down, was insignificant in size close to Güldengossa.

As Bessières' Cuirassiers followed the retreating Russian cavalry down the slope towards Güldengossa they caught sight of the Allied Staff on the hill above them, and had they been able to preserve their formation, they might possibly have made the brilliant capture of two Emperors and a King. At this time the Cossacks of the Guard, under Colonel Yefreimov, with a battery of Horse artillery, were standing dismounted under the Southern slope of the hill occupied by the Allied Sovereigns. The Emperor now—apparently prompted by some one, for the order was given immediately on the receipt of a written note which was brought by a Staff officer—ordered his Body Guard to mount and proceed with the Horse battery across the dam to attack the enemy. The Prussian Guards and Russian Reserves were then in sight, coming up behind, but still too far off to stop Murat's attack. Great numbers of the French

horsemen were falling in the ditch, but some, passing through Güldengossa, were coming on at the gallop. Meanwhile the front of the mass of French horsemen, rapidly growing denser near the two ponds to the West of Güldengossa as those in rear closed up, became noisy, and then unsteady on hearing the sound of fighting on the flanks and in rear. Some horsemen turned to retire, while others wished to advance, and thus all got in confusion. Prince Schwarzenberg, having begged the Allied Sovereigns to retire, which they did at a rapid pace towards the approaching Reserves, drew his sword and galloped off towards the struggling combatants.

The Cossacks had to move in single file through some infantry, but, covered by the undulations of the ground, they reached the Gossa ditch before they were noticed by the excited Frenchmen. There the battery was brought into action, for Count Orlow Denisow, who, as Colonel-in-Chief of the Red Cossacks, accompanied the Body-Guard, decided it was too hazardous to send it in amongst the French horsemen, and he ordered the cavalry to cross alone. The regiment had been joined by scattered detachments, and passing over one of the dams, on a small frontage, the Cossacks galloped at speed, with their lances down, into the front ranks of the French. Bordesoule's squadrons, some 5000 horsemen, which had advanced on a breadth of less than half a mile, and had while moving brought up their left shoulders, were now in a confused mass spread out over 1½ miles from East to West, and a mile from Front to Rear.

Just at this time, when Colonel Yefreimov was bearing down all in the immediate front of the French mass, General Duca appeared behind the

French. Prince Eugene, placing himself at the head of a cavalry brigade, led it forward on the right rear. The rearmost French squadrons repulsed both these attacks, and scattered in pursuit of their retreating foes. Meanwhile, Count Pahlen's cavalry had been again collected; and they attacked the left of the French cavalry, while the Cossacks were carrying all before them close to Güldengossa. Pahlen's 1st regiment was, however, overthrown, for, getting between two lines of French cavalry, it was overpowered and dispersed. Colonel von Hake, commanding the Silesian Cuirassiers regiment, now charged, and, being followed by a number of Allied cavalry, who had rallied after being previously defeated, drove back Bordesoule's men. Hake himself held his regiment well together, and followed up at a walk; but those who had joined him on either flank galloped wildly on after the enemy.

The French, having no further supports in hand, were forced slowly back. The Horse artillery battery, which had moved forward on the right of the 5th Corps, now fired on friends and foes alike, in order to check the Allied advance. General Druot's guns also opened fire on the crowd as it surged Northwards.

Meanwhile, the Cossacks were cleaving their way into the mass of foes. On fresh horses, and with long lances, they were more than a match for the Cuirassiers on their exhausted steeds; and these were chased back through the intervals of the diminished, but still intact, Russian battalions, the Cossacks retaking the great battery of captured guns. The charge of the Body-Guard was materially aided, first by the fire of a second Horse artillery battery, which came into action immediately South of the Gossa drain

alongside its own battery, and later by more artillery, which came into action immediately South of the Güldengossa Westernmost pond. As the French fought again on the 18th of October, and the daily casualties were not recorded, it is impossible to tell exactly the extent of their loss on the 16th, but it must have been great.

At the time that the French cavalry were retreating Northwards, the division of Raeffky's Grenadiers retook Auenhein from Victor's troops; and from this moment the tide of victory, flowing strongly, bore the Allies forward. General Bianchi, having brought up a division of Austrians, assaulted so vigorously the right flank of Augereau's Corps that he was obliged to give ground, and the Emperor himself was forced to ride hastily back to seek safety with the Old Guard.

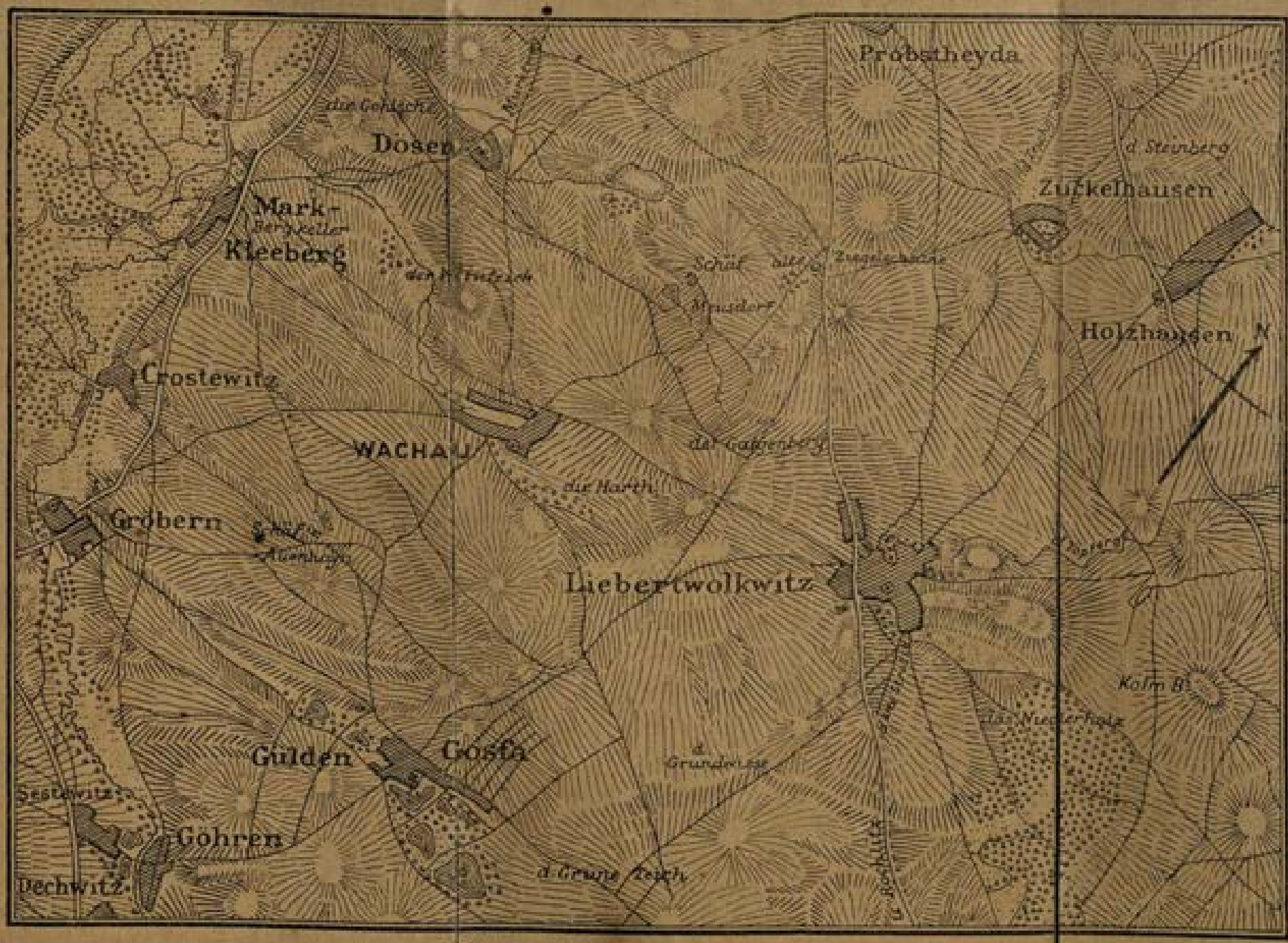
At this moment several orderly officers arrived in quick succession from Generals Marmont and Ney, who were greatly outnumbered to the North of Leipsic, begging for support to enable them to resist Prince Blucher's vehement attacks. Napoleon, about 6 o'clock, clearly realized the gravity of the situation, and reforming Victor's and Lauriston's Corps into one deep mass, he moved it forward on Gossa. The Allies, unable to resist this overwhelming body, retired Southwards, until the attack of the French was stayed by the fire of the artillery of the Russian Guard, massed in one great battery of 80 guns. A desultory cannonade ensued, and was carried on till night put an end to hostilities, the French and the Allies bivouacing in the positions they had respectively occupied in the morning.

General von Colomb, in his "Histoire de la Cavalerie Prussienne," explains Murat's conduct in charging

with separate regiments, and even squadrons, on the 14th October, by his knowledge that his cavalry were insufficiently trained to act in larger bodies. Some French writers, on insufficient ground, as it appears to me, combat this argument, and say that he wished only to gain time. However that may be as regards his leading on the 14th, there cannot be a doubt that he committed, on the 16th October, nearly every fault which a cavalry leader can make in the conduct of such a great enterprise as was entrusted to him. Although he had been on the ground for forty-eight hours, and had fought two days previously within two miles of Güldengossa, he had made no reconnaissance of the battle-field; and it therefore seems absurd to soldiers to find French writers excusing, and explaining the disaster by the statement that the French were surprised to find the low ground near Gossa too swampy for the movements of cavalry. No Reserve, nor even a Support, was kept in hand. The prince himself, riding in front of the leading squadron, galloped wildly at such a pace that his troops were already in disorder before they closed on the enemy.

General Bordesoule, writing in 1827, mentions that he repeatedly appealed urgently to a general officer, senior to him, who was in command of a division, for support, but that this was not afforded.* Bordesoule adds, and justly, that he possibly had other orders; but even assuming that another division had been thrown into the fight, it could scarcely, at the moment, have materially altered the disaster which Murat's faulty leading of the charge had induced.

* He apparently alluded to General St. Germain, who commanded the fine division of Cuirassiers and Carabiniers.



WACHAU (NEAR LEIPSIC),
OCTOBER 16TH, 1813.

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Nos. VII. and VIII.

CUSTOZA,

June, 1866.

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NOS. VII. AND VIII.

CUSTOZA, *June*, 1866.

VII. On the Western flank of the line of battle, an Austrian squadron, in order to relieve an overpowered infantry brigade, attacks an Italian brigade of five battalions, and surprising it while in column of route, drives it back in confusion, taking two guns.

VIII. On the Eastern flank of the battle-field, two Austrian cavalry brigades attack two divisions, and though repulsed, arrest all day the advance of thirty-six Italian battalions.

WHILE the Prussian armies were defeating the Austrians under the command of Field-marshal von Benedek, in Bohemia, the Archduke Albrecht, with some 70,000 men, gained a decided victory over 120,000 Italian troops, between Verona and Peschiera. Austria was obliged, from the political circumstances of the time, to mobilize two groups of armies, and at the extreme opposite ends of her frontiers. The greater part of her strength was naturally stationed in the more important sphere; but the force under the Archduke Albrecht had the advantage of a strong position which is well known under the name of the "Quadrilateral."

For the purpose of these studies we may omit all consideration of the country bordering the Lower Po, and the force under General Cialdini, as, owing

to a rise in the river, he was unable to advance, and our consideration need therefore be given only to the hilly rugged country lying between the Mincio and the flat plain which extends immediately to the North and East of the town of Villafranca.*

The former district, which, on account of its strategical and tactical value, has been the scene of many combats, is in itself peculiar. While hilly, the slopes of the heights, with a few exceptions, are not generally steep, nor are any of them inaccessible. It is traversed by a number of metalled roads in good order, and by many field-tracks and footpaths. There are numerous farms, both on the high and low ground, generally well built, with walls surrounding them. If we except some waste land covered by thornbush and copses, we may say that the country is well cultivated, although from its dry and arid nature there is little or no pasture. There are some vineyards, but most of the fields are sown with Indian corn, and studded with thick rows of mulberry trees. As many of the hills are about the same elevation, it is difficult to see far, even from their higher slopes. The river Tione, which rises a little to the North of the Peschiera-Castelnuovo road, runs due South, parallel to that road as far as Oliosi, the heights of which turn it to the South-east. At the time of the battle there was but little water in it, but the depth of the bed, and the steepness of its bank between Oliosi and Custoza, rendered it an obstacle of some importance. The Eastern slopes of this hilly country sink abruptly into an almost flat plain near Somma Campagna in the North, and between Custoza and Villafranca in the

* See maps at end of chapter.

South. The plain itself, on which the town of Villafranca (containing 7000 inhabitants) stands, is highly cultivated. Immediately to the North of the outskirts of the town the fields are small, and were covered at the time of the battle with high standing crops, principally of Indian corn. The ground is generally level, with a slight fall to the South-east, and is traversed by numerous cart-tracks and paths. It was broken up by rows of mulberry trees and vines, which often so obstructed the view, for distances much over a hundred yards, as to render the movements of cavalry very difficult; but, on the other hand, the infantry could not reap the full advantage of their fire-arms. There were no fences or ditches worthy of mention, except a deep drain bordering the Somma Campagna-Villafranca road, and broad and deep ditches, which, running on either side of the Villafranca-Verona road, added greatly to the loss sustained by the Austrian squadrons when they retreated.

Plan of the Campaign.

The King of Italy, Victor Emmanuel, having declared war, to be commenced within three days, crossed the frontier, *i.e.* the Mincio river, but without taking any precautions, and his cavalry, instead of pushing to the front close up to Verona, marched in rear of the infantry. It is remarkable, moreover, that we learn in studying this action that while the Austrian horsemen were scattering the Italian infantry near Villafranca, the single orderly carrying the orders to the Italian cavalry division, which was to act as support to the infantry, lost his way, and the orders were never delivered. However, as the Italian cavalry

was intended to be in reserve, this incident did not affect the result.

While the Italians were without information, and imagined that the Archduke was on the left bank of the Adige, *i.e.* behind Verona, the Austrians, mainly by skilful use of their cavalry, which, supported by a battalion of rifles, was pushed out to the front, were kept well informed of the position of the Italian troops. Not only were all the fords on the Mincio carefully watched, but touch was maintained with the Italian cavalry, and alarm-signals arranged for the rapid transmission of news of the enemy's advance. The archduke intended, by throwing forward his right from the fortress of Peschiera, to take the Italian army in flank as it moved from the Mincio across the hilly country towards the Adige river.

On the night of the 23rd June the Italian troops advanced between 1 and 2 a.m. in several separate columns which were not closely connected, while the Austrians, on the other hand, kept their troops closely linked together. Dealing first with the action of the cavalry on the Western side of the battle-field, we see that the Austrian infantry under the brigadier-general (Benko), who had left his bivouac near Pastrengo, a few miles North-west of Verona, at 3 a.m., was at 7.30 a.m. at the Southern end of Mount Cricole, occupying that height, and the Mongabia hill, with a battery established on Mount Cricole,* and overlooking the road underneath it. He was there attacked by the Italian general (Villahermosa), who had duly informed General Cerale, then just advancing from Monzambano, that the advanced guard was engaged. There was now a general attack on

* See map, No. XIII., at end of chapter.

Mongabia and Mount Cricole, in which marked courage was shown by both sides; but the Austrians being outnumbered, in the proportion of two to one, were presently driven back in disorder, Benko's brigade leaving two of its guns in the hands of the enemy. The Mongabia hill was also abandoned, and occupied by the Italians.

At this time Major Stoppini, commanding the 2nd battalion of the 43rd regiment, at the head of the brigade Forli, was on the East of the road with one company extended in skirmishing order, being followed by a section (two guns) of a battery which was on the road itself. At the village, Stoppini deployed two more companies to the right, on the heights to the Eastward of Mongabia, keeping one company to support the artillery. Swarms of Italian Bersaglieri preceded and accompanied this attack, and, pressing on, carried the farm called Fenile, pursuing up to where the Austrian brigade (Benko) was being rallied. At this moment Benko's shattered brigade was rescued by the heroic conduct of a squadron of Austrian lancers of the Sicilian Regiment, in the following manner:—

A squadron and a half had been placed, some time earlier, at Corte, near San Giorgio, in support of the Artillery of the Reserve. Lieutenant-colonel de Berres, seeing the disaster which was overwhelming General Benko, sent Captain Baron Bechtoldsheim with three troops of the 6th squadron—total, all ranks, 101 men—to attack, in flank, the Italian column then marching on Fenile. Bechtoldsheim rode straight to the Tione, but while he was endeavouring to find a way down its steep banks, the Austrians were driven out of Fenile. The Lancers, however, having crossed the river-bed,

moved Westwards up to the Castelnuovo road, and then turning Southwards, passed Benko's brigade, at this moment trying to rally, and ascended Mount Cricole in order to reconnoitre the advancing enemy. Bechtoldsheim now saw, in the low ground underneath, the two guns and rear company of the 2nd battalion of the 43rd regiment, and close to them a group of mounted officers, which consisted of Generals Cerale and Dho, and their Staffs, who were riding behind the leading battalion of the brigade Forli, all unsuspicious of the proximity of the Lancers. Bechtoldsheim descending at speed, and passing on his right scattered fractions of the Pisa brigade, rode at the guns before they could unlimber. The generals, their Staffs, and the drivers of the guns fled at a gallop, but a lancer killed the lieutenant in command, and the guns were overtaken. Major Stoppini was speared on the outskirts of the village of Mongabia, and the chief Staff officer of Cerale's division was, with his horse, knocked over into a ditch. Captain Bechtoldsheim had his horse shot, and fell underneath it, but extricating himself and mounting on that of Major Stoppini, he pursued the flying enemy.

The sudden attack of the Lancers, and the rapid retreat of the guns, produced a panic in the brigade Forli, which was following the 43rd regiment on the road, and at this moment the Austrian brigade Weimar, coming on, attacked Fenile, while another column pursued the 2nd battalion of the 43rd, driving it back to Oliosi. The battalion rallied at this village, but the Lancers, charging again, rode through the Italian ranks, obliging Generals Cerale and Dho to fight for their lives. The latter was wounded

three times by lancers, and General Cerale was accidentally wounded by a bullet fired by one of his own men. This charge so demoralized the Italians that when the Austrian brigade Piret, coming on, completed the disorder, the brigade Forli broke up, the men being panic-stricken. Of its five battalions only one remained firm. This one was not touched by the Lancers during their attack, in which scarcely a horseman was hurt, but, as the squadron came back from the pursuit, the battalion lined a hedge and punished the Lancers heavily. The other battalions had dispersed in all directions. Some men were rallied at Oliosi, but others fled as far as Monzambano and Valeggio, distant three and four miles respectively.

Captain Bechtoldsheim collected the 17 men of his squadron still remaining in the saddle, leaving as casualties on the ground 2 officers, 84 men, and 79 horses. He paid dearly for his determined action, but the result was worth a much greater loss. Not only did he gain breathing time for Benko's brigade to rally, but the panic he created down the road caused such great delay in the Italian advance as to give the Austrian supports time to come up.

If we turn now to the Eastern side of the battle-field,* we shall see a still more remarkable instance of the effects which can be produced by determined cavalry leaders.

The divisions of Prince Humbert and Bixio, the 16th and 7th respectively, had marched at 1.30 a.m. on Villafranca. A storm of wind rising about 10 p.m. had overturned their tents, but the accompanying heavy rains allayed, till after sunrise, the dust,

* See map, No. XIV., at end of chapter.

which in that district is always trying in summer-time. The 7th and 16th divisions were preceded each by a squadron of cavalry, which had got to the North of Villafranca before daylight, but reported that there were no signs of the enemy to be seen, although the country people stated that Austrian cavalry and Horse artillery had been in the neighbourhood on the previous day. The Italian generals were under the impression that the Austrians would not be seen in force until the Adige was reached, and remained under this erroneous idea until the heavy fire, opened near Oliosi, was heard. Two brigades of Austrian cavalry, placed temporarily under the command of Colonel Pulz, had been ordered to advance from their bivouacs outside Verona, and cover the left flank of the army. Pulz's own brigade consisted of the 13th (Count Trani's) Lancers, 13th Hussars, 1st Emperor's Hussars, all of four squadrons each; and 8 Horse artillery guns. Bujanovic's brigade consisted of the 12th (Sicilian) Lancers, two squadrons; 11th (Wurtemberg) and 3rd (Bavarian) Hussars, each of three squadrons. Total, 20 squadrons, with 2230 horses. Shortly after 5 a.m. they were in position to the South of Somma-Campagna, ready to attack the Italians, whose approach was indicated by clouds of dust rising high in the air, notwithstanding the rain-storm overnight. The left Austrian brigade, under Colonel Bujanovics, had detached one squadron, the 6th, at 2.30 a.m. on duty to the Westward—the Sicilian Lancers, whose brilliant exploit I have tried to describe. Of the remaining eight squadrons of the brigade, five had been on outpost duty all night, but rejoined before daylight, when the brigade marched off in two columns.

At 6.45 a.m. a troop of the 11th Hussars, supported

by two squadrons Wurtemberg Hussars, attacked the advanced guard squadron of Prince Humbert's division at Calori, which stands one and a quarter miles North-east of Villafranca, near the Verona road. The Italian squadron retired, pursued by the Austrian Hussars, through a chain of Bersaglieri, extended as skirmishers, who were covering Prince Humbert's advance, and pressed on up to a line of battalions formed in squares to the East of Villafranca. These opened fire on the Austrians, who retired slowly, the retreat being covered by two other squadrons, which had advanced halfway between Calori and Villafranca, and Bujanovics reassembled his brigade at Academia.

Colonel Pulz's own brigade, formed in line of columns, was at this moment passing Palazzina, and on hearing the firing, the brigadier determined to attack, in flank, the troops which he imagined were advancing on the Verona road against Bujanovics, and he sent him orders to move from Academia to his right, and co-operate. Colonel Pulz, hearing shortly afterwards from his scouts that there were two Italian cavalry regiments to the North of Villafranca—which was, however, an error, as there were but two squadrons—the brigadier, having deployed his brigade, three squadrons of each regiment in line, one squadron as support in column behind the outer flanks, advanced. Count Trani's Lancers were on the left, and the Emperor's Hussars on the right, but somewhat in rear, with a battery between the two, and on the road. As Pulz passed Gaffardine, he caught sight of the Italian squadrons, and ordered his battery to open fire, which was returned from a section of an Italian battery, in action on the Verona road. The fire was innocuous.

on either side, and at 7.15 a.m. the brigadier gave the order to attack to the Southward in the following words: "Lancers direct—Ride over whatever is in our front."

We will turn now to the Italian side, and consider what was occurring in the divisions led by Generals Bixio and Prince Humbert.

At 6.30 a.m. Prince Humbert was informed, when near Cascina San Giovanni, by an aide-de-camp who was returning from a reconnaissance on the Verona road, that he had seen some of the enemy's squadrons near Calori. Prince Humbert immediately deployed his leading brigade into two "lines of columns at half intervals," the lines being at three hundred yards' distance. The prince, at this time, having previously gone out to the front to watch the brigade of Austrian cavalry commanded by Bujanovics, had just returned to his division, the leading brigade of which, according to his instructions, was retiring slowly on Villafranca. At the moment, surrounded by his Staff, he was on the road, when suddenly the Italian and Austrian batteries ceased fire, and the shaking of the ground, with the noise of galloping horses, indicated clearly that an attack by cavalry was imminent. General Ferrero ordered his brigade to get into squares, but the movement was only half completed when the Lancers, who had received the order "Charge" when at two hundred paces distance, galloped through the mulberry trees, and with the greatest determination threw themselves by sections on the Italian infantry. Neither the Austrian horsemen nor the Italian battalions had much warning of the collision, for the trees hid both sides, and the

squadrons, riding fast, had closed up to their ground scouts, who did not see the Italians till they were a quarter of a mile south of Canuova, and within five hundred yards of the foe. The 4th battalions of the 49th, and of the 50th, had just time enough to complete the square formations, and Prince Humbert, followed by his Staff, managed to ride through a broad deep ditch bordering the roadway, and get into the nearest square a moment before the Lancers reached the spot.

General Revel, Prince Humbert's chief adviser, who was returning from the Front, where he had been reconnoitring on the Verona road, having a fast horse, just managed to escape the horsemen. His Staff officer, however, was overtaken, and knocked out of the saddle. In a moment the brigade Parma, with the exception of those in square, was overpowered by the Lancers, who galloped right over the bayonets, on the points of which several of their horses were transfixed. The 2nd battalion of the 49th regiment was caught while retiring in line, previous to getting into square, and it broke up, scattering in all directions under the headlong attack of the cavalry. Two companies of the 3rd battalion of the same regiment, which were in skirmishing order in the fields to the West of the road, had not time to get into groups before the Austrians were on them, and they fled, every man seeking safety for himself. Two other companies formed a rallying square around the Colours of the regiment, and were successfully retired under the protection of a square formed further back. Two of the battalions of this regiment being well formed in square at the Eastern corner of Villafranca, facing round to the rear, repulsed their attackers.

While the Lancers were spearing some infantry grouped round a large mulberry tree, and shouting to them to surrender, a squadron of Italian cavalry, issuing forth from the town, charged Trani's men in flank. The 1st squadron met the attack, and was followed by the others, and all now came at the gallop on a battery, which at the moment was between the first and second line of the Parma brigade. It was surprised; some drivers galloped to the rear with the limbers, abandoning the guns, two of which, on the road itself, were taken in reverse, and the gunners were speared. The guns could have been carried off by the Lancers on the Verona road had not the roadway been blocked by fallen horses, many of which fell with their riders into the broad ditch, where they were shot by the groups of Bersaglieri, which they had attacked and then left near the mulberry trees in order to follow the Italian squadron.

The limbers of the artillery, and numberless soldiers who had been routed, flying towards the rear, initiated a panic which seized the transport further back. General de la Rocca at once endeavoured to restore order, and sent forward three squadrons across the fields between the railroad, and the Verona road. The Austrian cavalry, at this moment, scattered in pursuit, were overpowered by these three squadrons, and in order to avoid the bullets from the squares, the men of which were firing behind them at point-blank range, the greater part of the Lancers rode on towards Villafranca, hoping to retire by the Verona road. Some few surrendered; others endeavouring to jump the deep ditch which borders this road, fell into it, while others again, seeing that their comrades

could not cross, retreated close by the squares, and suffered much loss.

During the attack of the Lancers, the Emperor's Hussars, under command of Colonel Rigyitsky, collided with the 7th division under General Bixio, whose leading brigade, having formed across the Villafranca-Somma-Campagna road, was extending its left towards Pozzo Moretta, with two companies of Bersaglieri. Ten minutes after the charge of Trani's Lancers, Rigyitsky, when close to Villafranca, came in sight of three squadrons of Italian cavalry, which, wheeling about, galloped away to the rear, unmasking lines of Bersaglieri extended in skirmishing order, and behind them stood the formed squares of Bixio's leading brigade. The Hussars, passing through the skirmishers, who, formed in groups, never hesitated, and galloping at the squares, overthrew at the same moment a detachment of cavalry which attempted to take the Austrians in flank. These were the same squadrons which had been previously shaken by Trani's Lancers. Although the Hussars did not succeed in actually breaking any squares, yet they threw them into disorder; but eventually, being fired on heavily, the squadrons retired, followed by an Italian regiment, which near Canuova was met and repulsed by Bujanovics's brigade. The survivors of Pulz's brigade rallied near Ganfardine. Out of 600 who had ridden forward, only about 200, under 1st Lieutenant Rodakowski, answered the Roll call, the remainder being dead, wounded, or taken prisoners. Colonel Pulz now received, on his return to Ganfardine, an order for his division to adopt a passive attitude.

When, about 7.30 a.m., Bujanovics received the order from Brigadier Pulz to move to the right, the brigade

of eight squadrons trotted to Canuova, and then turning to the South, advanced in column of troops on Villafranca, the Wurtemberg Hussars on the right, Bavarian Hussars in the centre, and the Sicilian Lancers in echelon on the left rear. As the brigade approached the town it came under heavy artillery fire, which, from Casella onwards, caused many casualties. On reaching Canuova both flanks were attacked by several squadrons of the enemy, but they were vigorously repulsed, and driven back on to their infantry. The squadrons on the flank of the brigades, *i.e.* the 11th Hussars (Wurtemberg) on the right, and the Sicilian Lancers on the left, retired by order without attacking the eight squares, which were now well formed and steady, while the two squadrons of the Hussars (Bavarian), which had been moving in support, galloping forward, drove back the Italian cavalry which had followed up the flank squadrons of the brigades. Each attack of the two brigades, though not quite simultaneous, lasted about fifteen minutes. About eight o'clock Bujanovics retired to Casetta, leaving two squadrons in contact with the enemy near Villafranca.

During this short but gallant feat of the cavalry the Italians lost 17 killed, 71 wounded, and 10 prisoners, mainly in the 3rd squadron of the Light Dragoons of Alexandria. The infantry which got into square suffered practically no loss.

Brigadier-general Pulz's command remained inactive and unmolested all day till the evening, watching the enemy from the neighbourhood of Ganfardine, who made no attempt to resume the march to Somma-Campagna, which place it had been intended should be occupied by the 6th and 7th Italian divisions.

About 5 p.m. the Austrian infantry were assaulting the line of hills, Mount Croce-Custozza,* which stand about two miles to the North-west of Villafranca, when Brigadier Pulz was ordered to threaten the right flank of the Italian troops holding those positions. He formed two columns, and having sent one regiment towards Villafranca to cover his left flank, he moved on the Valeggio road, which passes between Villafranca and Pozzo Moretta. The right column, of which he took the personal command, was composed of the Emperor's Hussars and two squadrons of Wurtemberg Hussars, while Bujanovics led the left column, composed of four squadrons of Bavarian Hussars and two of Sicilian Lancers. A battery of Horse artillery, and the survivors of Trani's Lancers, formed the support; while a squadron of the Wurtemberg Hussars covered the left flank.

When Brigadier-general Pulz was approaching the Berettara ditch,† learning that the houses on the Western edge of it were occupied by Italian infantry, he brought a battery into action, but meeting with no resistance, sent one column to cross over at the bridge, the other fording the ditch half a mile further North. Once across the dyke, Pulz deployed the regiment of Emperor's Hussars into line, with a squadron of Wurtemberg Hussars behind either flank, and he then moved rapidly forward by Cerchi, on Capella. At Cerchi he came on two companies of infantry, the men of which laid down their arms and surrendered. Further in front, seeing bodies of scattered detachments of the enemy, who, having retreated from Mount Croce, were making for Villafranca, his squadrons dashed into them; they were all

* See map, No. XIII. † See map, No. XIV.

moving in disorder, and the horsemen made great numbers of prisoners; but then, from over-excitement, they lost the direction of advance. Lieut.-colonel Rigyitsky, leading two squadrons and a half of his own regiment, the Emperor's Hussars, and one squadron of Wurtemberg Hussars, pursued the Italian infantry up to the North-west corner of the town, where several formed bodies stood, with artillery in action. These did not, however, fire, and many men, coming singly out of the town, gave themselves up as prisoners, declaring that those within the building were ready to surrender. The colonel sent an officer with a white flag to inform an Italian general, who was not far off, that the rest of the army being beaten, his troops at Villafranca were cut off, and that he must lay down his arms. This the general, who was Bixio himself, declined to do; and as the officer retired, fire was re-opened, and the colonel drew back his men and reported to Brigadier-general Pulz what had taken place.

In the mean time, however, the right half of the brigade, under the brigadier himself, was pursuing the fugitives who were coming down from Mount Torre, *i.e.* the hill immediately over Pozzo Moretta, while at the same moment Colonel Bujanovics was moving on Capella, near which place his scouts had reported several detachments of the enemy's cavalry. Bujanovics immediately changed direction to the left, and moved to the attack, but the Italians retired so rapidly that they could not be overtaken. In pursuing them, Bujanovics charged several squares in position to the North of Villafranca, but was beaten back, and then by Colonel Pulz's order, retired to Ganfardine, two squadrons of Bavarian Hussars being

left in contact with the enemy on the Berettara ditch.

Brigadier-general Pulz now recognized clearly that his horses, which had been neither fed nor watered since 3 a.m., were incapable of an effective pursuit. He, however, having received Lieut.-colonel Rigyitsky's report, considered that it was worth while to endeavour to persuade the Italian infantry, still in occupation of Villafranca, to surrender, and advanced a battery on the Staffalo-Villafranca road, and formed a line composed of two squadrons of Sicilian Lancers and a squadron of Wurtemberg Hussars, the two contact squadrons being ordered to conform, while Bujanovics was directed to prolong the line to the left.

Pulz himself advanced straight on the roadway, for even on that firm surface his horses could only be urged forward at a walk. When he came to within 300 yards of the enemy, he perceived a detachment of Italian Lancers moving forward. Two Austrian guns opened fire, and the Italian cavalry retreating, the Emperor's Hussars galloped after them, till at a turn of the road close to Villafranca they came in front of infantry formed in square, and several batteries, which opened a hot fire at point blank range. The handful of Austrian Hussars, without hesitation, galloped straight at the squares, but were obliged to retire, suffering heavily. Hearing this noise, Colonel Bujanovics increased the pace of his men, but it was impossible to get the horses to gallop. Two squadrons of Bavarian Hussars went forward, but coming under the fire of infantry formed behind trees, were obliged to retire. Colonel Bujanovics now selected thirty of the least exhausted horses, and galloped at the battery formed at the

angle of the road. Night was just closing in, and a battalion of Bersaglieri, concealed behind trees, jumping up, fired into the Hussars at point blank range. Bujanovics's horse was shot dead, and he himself, dangerously wounded, fell close to the bayonets of a square. Lieut. Krisztianyi and one hussar only reached the battery. There they found one cannon upset in a ditch, and two others abandoned in a field with the teams taken away, and the detachments dispersed. Krisztianyi now fell seriously wounded under his dead horse, which lay on his foot. Some of the Italian infantry, in the excitement of the moment, struck at him with the butts of their guns; others bayoneted him, and the lieutenant would doubtless have been killed, but that he attracted the attention of General Bixio, to whom he tendered his sword. The general refused to accept the sword, saying: "No! Keep it, for you are worthy to wear it," and had him immediately sent to hospital.

The Austrian cavalry, being thoroughly exhausted, now drew back, in the first place to Ganfardine, where, being unable to water, they left two squadrons on outpost duty, the remainder returning to their bivouac of the previous night, near Verona, which was reached at 10 p.m.

The two brigades of Austrian cavalry took over 2400 prisoners, and suffered a loss themselves as follows:—

	Killed.		Wounded.		Missing.		Horses.
	Officers.	Others.	Officers.	Others.	Officers.	Others.	
Pulz's Brigade.	2	45	6	55	2	161	355
Bujanovics's Brigade.		2	7	21	1	67	132

Nearly all these casualties occurred in the first half-hour's fighting.

Comments.—The initial losses of the Italians, and subsequently those which followed throughout the day, were due to the want of information of the enemy's plans. On the other hand, the Archduke Albrecht had taken every precaution, both to hide his own movements and to ascertain those of the Italians. Until the army actually advanced, the Italians were well supplied with information from individuals within the frontier, who were hostile to the Austrians, but this source failed directly the Austrians took steps to prevent information being taken to the enemy. If, instead of trusting to a system of spies, the cavalry of the King's army had been thrown forward close to Verona, the Italian army would not have been surprised in its march.

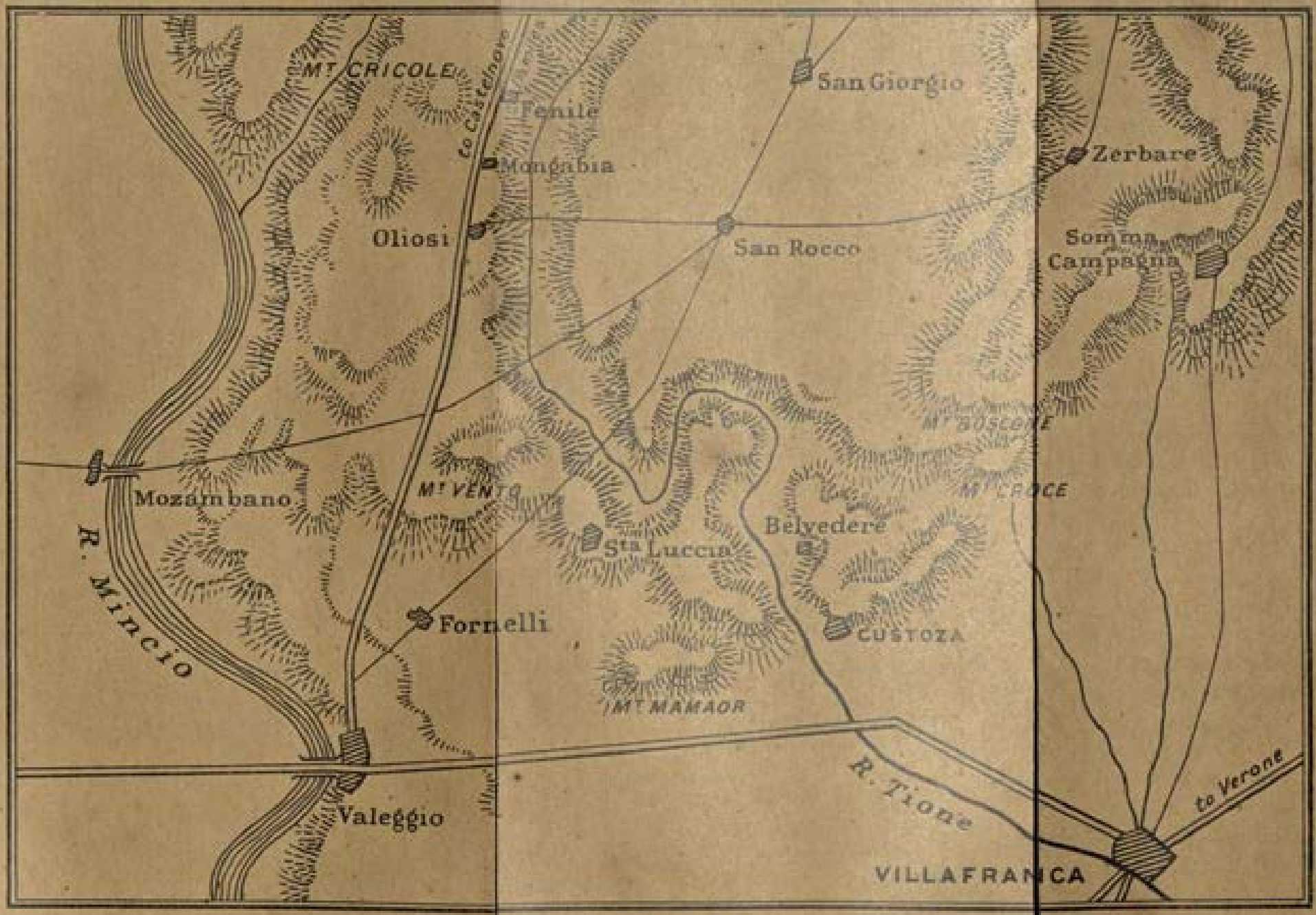
It is remarkable how very little use the Italian Commander-in-Chief made of his cavalry, the bulk of which was kept out of action in the rear of the infantry columns. Whatever may have been the cause, or causes, for this faulty arrangement, there can be no doubt that the opposing horsemen were unequally matched. Since 1860 the numbers of the Italian army had been steadily increased; but in Italy there is a great want of the material from which efficient cavalry is made, while at the opening of the campaign the regiments were very short of horses. On the other hand, the Austrian cavalry attracts all the best of the aristocracy into the ranks of the officers, and the Rank and File are carefully selected from well-to-do peasantry; and in spite of the inevitable hardships of a service in which neither man nor beast is ever spared, such is the high spirit of the

Arm that there is never any difficulty in obtaining willing soldiers, it being understood, in a conscripted army, that they must all serve in some branch. Officers and men ride well, and in June, 1866, both regimental and brigade commanders were excellent, although the qualities necessary for a leader of higher command were not often shown in the campaign in Bohemia.

Colonel Pulz was forty-three years of age, and Bajanovics five years older. Both had served with distinction in the Hungarian War of 1848-49, and in the Italian Campaign of 1859. Captain Baron Bechtoldsheim was thirty-two years of age. His astounding feat was not appreciated in Austria till Major Corsi, of the Italian staff, some years afterwards wrote his account of the war. Then, in 1870, Baron Bechtoldsheim received the much-prized order of Maria Theresa.

The fact of the Italian infantry having been armed with rifles (muzzle loaders, and not smooth bores), did not materially affect the question of the relative power of the two Arms, as, on account of the cultivation, it was seldom possible to see more than 100 yards.

The Austrian Commander-in-chief, having changed his plans during the night, sent orders to General Pulz to maintain a passive attitude all day. Had this order been received before Pulz attacked, the 6th and 7th Italian divisions might easily have advanced, but, fortunately for the Archduke, the officer carrying the orders arrived at Ganfardine a few minutes after Pulz's advance had been begun. This delay enabled a determined leader, imbued with the true spirit of cavalry, to so employ his devoted squadrons that for fourteen hours they prevented the advance of an Army Corps.

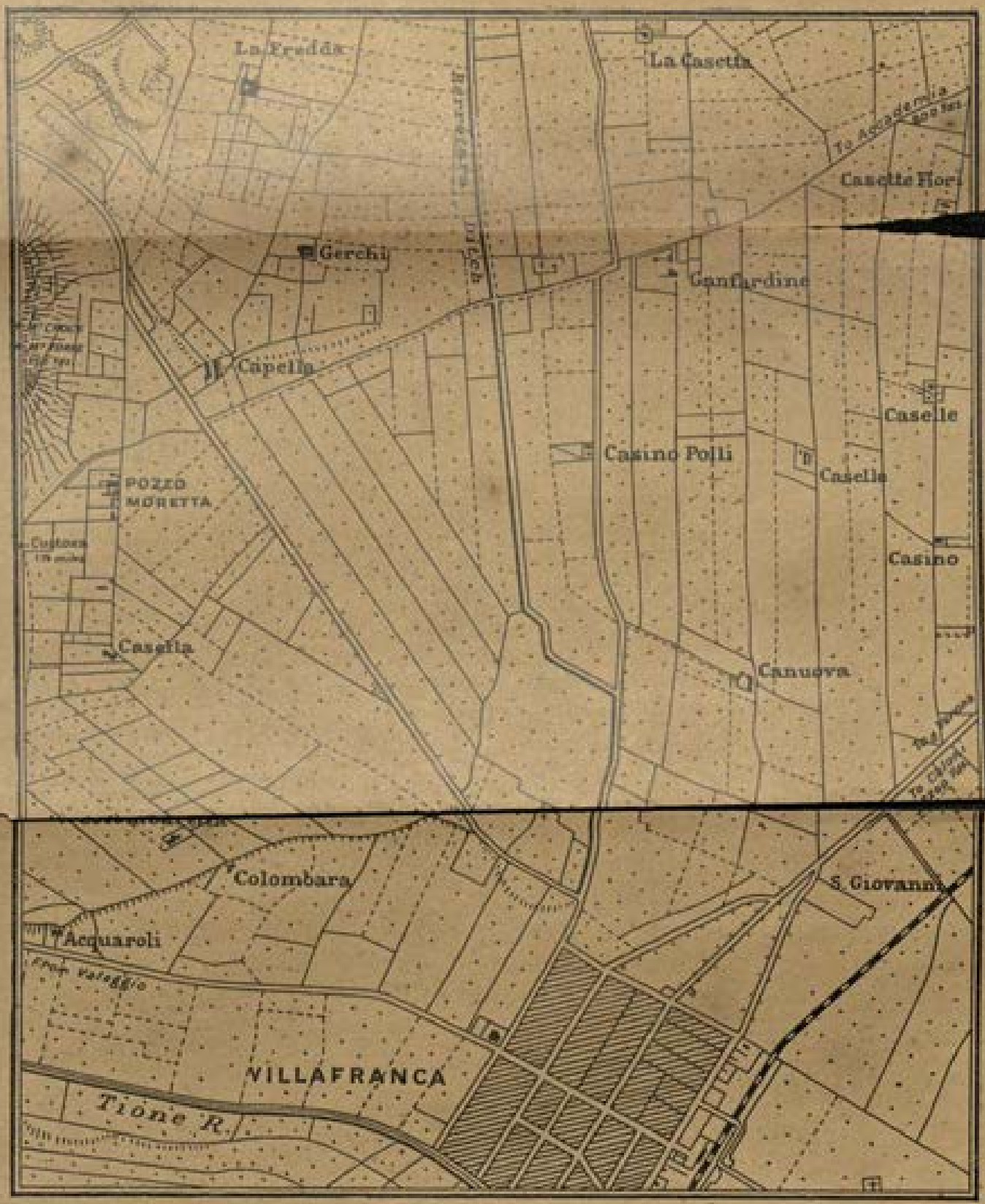


THE HILLY COUNTRY NEAR CUSTOZA.

ACTION FOUGHT JUNE 24TH, 1866.

[To face p. 160.

No. XIV.



THE PLAINS NEAR CUSTOZA.

ACTION FOUGHT JUNE 24TH, 1866.

(To face p. 160.

No. IX.

BENATEK,

3rd July, 1866.

No. IX.

BENATEK, *3rd July*, 1866.

A squadron of Prussian Hussars, surprising a Hungarian battalion as it emerges from a wood, captures a Colour, 16 officers, and 665 of other ranks.

THE causes which induced the great war of 1866 are to be found in the constant struggles for supremacy of the two dominant races in North and South Germany. They combined, in 1864, to crush Denmark, and to take from that country the Elbe Duchies; but no sooner had this been carried out than the antagonistic aims of the conquerors became apparent. An effort was, indeed, made, and recorded in the Treaty of Gastein, to preserve peace. Under this agreement, Schleswig was occupied by Prussian, and Holstein by Austrian troops, the two Duchies being governed by the respective Powers furnishing the garrisons; but this make-shift arrangement lasted only for a short time.

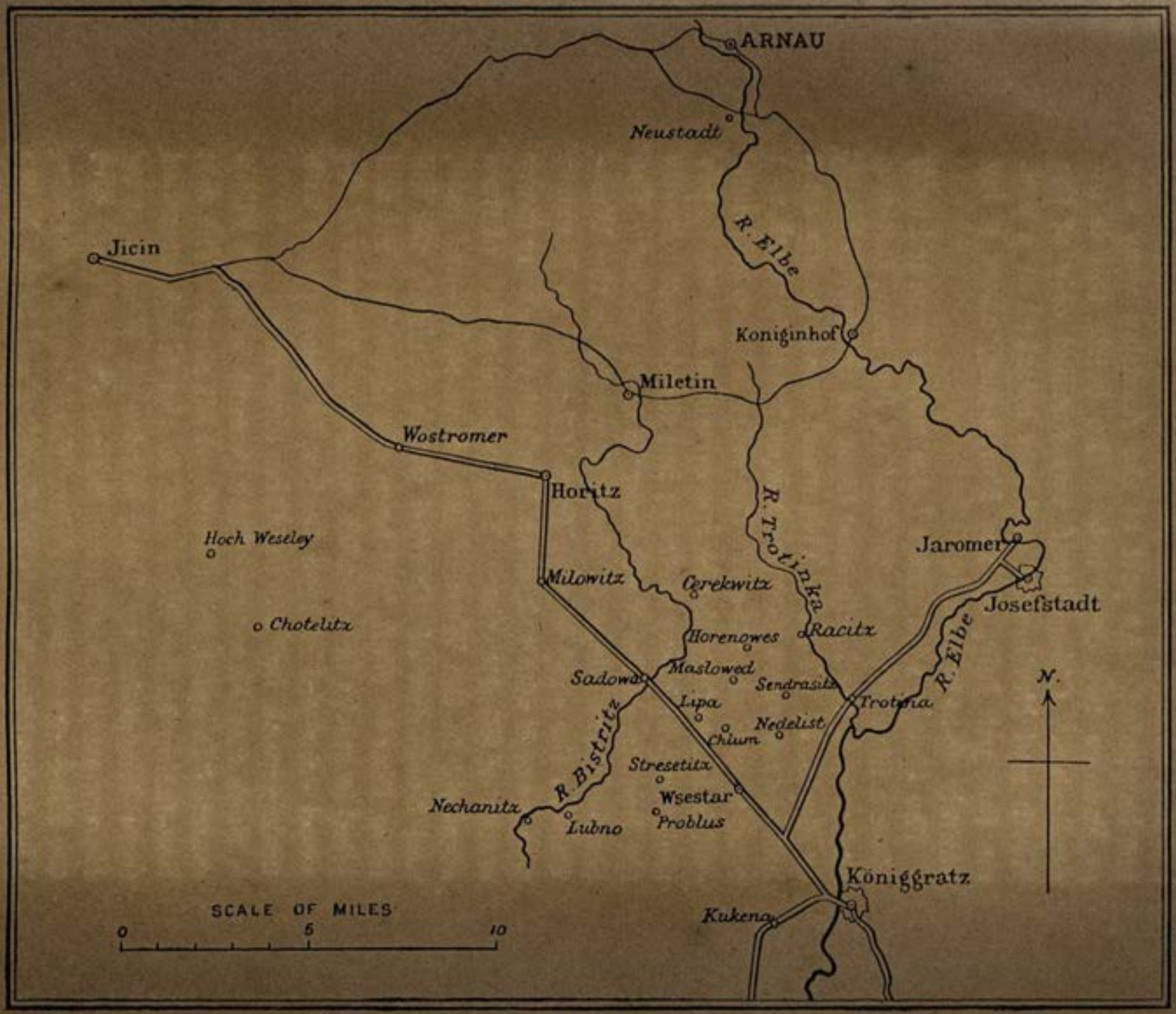
In 1866, Italy having thrown in her lot with Prussia, war was declared between the North and South German States, the orders for the invasion of Bohemia being telegraphed from Berlin on the 22nd June. It soon became apparent that the armies of Austria were so inferior in numbers, in armament, and in the education of the higher officers, that the struggle,

for her, was hopeless from the first, and the general result of the several battles fought by the three separate armies of Prussia, from the 26th June to the 28th, led up to the crowning victory of Königgrätz, which was won two days after the command of the united armies had been assumed by the King of Prussia.

Benedek's position, chosen to arrest the Prussians near Königgrätz, was on a chain of hills between the Elbe and the Bistritz, a stream which runs generally from North to South, five miles distant from the Elbe.* It is about twelve feet broad, with marshy banks and muddy bottom, and is, therefore, for mounted troops, passable only at the bridges. The range of hills, the slopes of which are nowhere steeper than 10°, except on the North side of the Swiep Wald, culminates at Problus and Chlum, sinking into the plain between Tresowitz and Stresititz. The range on the North-east stretches towards Horenowes, and then trends back in an Easterly direction to the Trotinna river, near Racitz. The top of the ridge is about one mile and a half from the Bistritz, the slope up from which is somewhat steep and broken, while towards the Elbe the ground falls with a gentle inclination, and there in no part forms any obstacle to cavalry or artillery. Further to the South-west the country rises towards Lubno, reaching its highest point in the high ground to the Southward of Nechanitz.

The country about the Imperial road, Lubno-Prim, is very open, though studded with villages, of which there are seven. These villages were not placed in a state of defence, even the entrances being left unclosed. Some abatis had been placed in position,

* See map, No. XV.



THE COUNTRY NEAR KÖNIGGRATZ.

but not enough, and the strong stone buildings were not loopholed. As part of the Austrian army was at Sadowa two days before the battle, this is inexplicable. Chlum itself was fortified only at the North and North-west, and was attacked at 3 p.m. on the 3rd July, on the North-east, where it lay entirely open to assault.

The charge with which I am now concerned took place a little to the South-west of, but near, Benatek, and outside the North-west front of the Swiep Wald, or Maslowed Wood.* This wood stands mostly on a hill, and measures 1000 paces from North to South, and 2000 from East to West. The ridge is steep and difficult of access from the North, on which side the slopes are cut up by many ravines; but the descent towards the Bistritz, on the North-west, is more gradual. The South-eastern slope of the hill, as far to the Westward as the road leading from Cistowes to Benatek, was covered with oak scrub, in which there were many stacks of piled timber. The triangular belt of trees standing to the West of the above-mentioned road, and North-east of the road which descends the hill from East to West, had been cut down in parts and piled in stacks in a similar manner. The rest of the wood consisted of high timber, in some places with undergrowth, but was in others clear of it.

Such was the nature of the ground on which Field-marshal Benedek had assembled his army. The first line, facing to the West and to the North, stretched from Nechanitz, by Lipa, Maslowed, Benatek, near Horenowes, to Sendrasitz, between which place and the Elbe was stationed Prince Taxis' cavalry division. The second line was about Nedelist, and to the North

See map at end of chapter.

of Wsestar were not only the corps of Clam Gallas and Ramming, but all the Reserves of cavalry and artillery. Thus nearly all Benedek's Mounted men were assembled on ground much too contracted for their effective use. The artillery was well placed on the high ground which formed the two fronts of the position, and was, in many instances, in tiers of batteries, on the Western slopes of the hills, covered by epaulments; but the lower slopes of the position, though abatis had been put down in places, were inadequately prepared and insufficiently occupied by infantry.

The characteristics of the opposing armies differed essentially. The Prussian troops were practically homogeneous, speaking one language, bound by ties of localization, and, in the lower ranks, more highly educated than those of any other Power. The Austrian forces were drawn from five distinct races, speaking different languages, and, in some cases, being still more widely separated perhaps in thoughts, education and feelings. In the previous week's operations 35,000 men, many guns and Colours, had been lost, and, in addition to the depression naturally due to such reverses, difficulties had arisen in the last few days as regards rations, owing to the very concentrated position taken up by the armies. On the 1st July, though the troops marched actually from point to point only nine miles, the movement occupied nearly twenty-four hours. Soldiers who have been on service will understand the exhausting effect of such an operation.

The Austrians had 190,000 men and 600 guns on the ground, and the Prussians allege that, although they had 780 guns in the field, they brought only 210,000 men and a much smaller number of guns

into action, until the crisis of the battle was over and the retreat had been commenced.

In Achievement No. VII. I endeavoured to show how well the Austrian cavalry performed Outpost duties on the Mincio before they fought so grandly at Custoza; but in the Bohemian campaign, though they covered the retreat of the battle of Königgrätz with devoted gallantry, the scouting duties were badly done. Major Adams, who served for many years in the Austrian army, having been present in the battle of Novara (1849),* says the cavalry officers were not sufficiently educated to estimate correctly the enemy's numbers, nor what his movements portended. They thought only of shock tactics, and though both officers and men were generally of a class superior to the average infantry soldier, yet their military education was defective. The failure of the cavalry to afford Field-marshal Benedek timely information was one of the many causes which tended to his decisive defeat on the 3rd July.

On the evening of the 2nd July the King of Prussia's headquarters were at Jicin; Prince Frederick Charles, with the 1st Army, was at Kamenitz; the Crown Prince, with the 2nd Army, at Koniginhof; and General von Herwarth's division was at Hoch Weseley. The Prussian armies were extended on a frontage of 25 miles, the advanced guard, formed by the 7th and 8th divisions, being in Milowitz, Gross-Jeritz, and Cerekwitz.

* When I was studying at the Staff College in 1863-64, Major Adams was an instructor at the Royal Military College, about three quarters of a mile distant, and, with several fellow-students, I used to attend some of his lectures. In that on the Novara Campaign he was the most eloquent lecturer I ever heard.

The morning of the 3rd opened unpleasantly; rain fell, accompanied by mist, the skies were clouded, and for the season of the year it was bitterly cold. This was felt the more, by the troops in bivouac, owing to the sudden fall in temperature, the weather during the previous week having been hot, and the night of the 29th–30th June unbearably so.

General Fransecky's division (the 7th) had assembled at 1.30 a.m., and got into position at Cerekwitz by 3 o'clock. Shortly before 7 a.m., when the Prussian advanced guard came in sight, fire was opened by the Austrian batteries on the South side of the Bistritz, between the woods of Sadowa and the Swiep Wald. By 7.30 a.m. the artillery fire of the opposing forces had become general, although Prince Frederick Charles, commanding the 1st Army, had given orders that the Prussian batteries should only fire slowly until the weather cleared, and that the leading portion of the advanced guard should not cross the Bistritz until the rear of it had closed up.

Shortly after 8 a.m., when the King of Prussia came on the ground, the 7th division seized the right bank of the Bistritz, and then proceeded to attack the Swiep Wald, into which the Austrian Major-general, Brandenstein, had moved forward the main body of his brigade from its bivouac at the South-east of Maslowed, in order that he might support both wings of his outpost line. Into the wood he sent at this time four battalions, while his battery came into action to the South of Maslowed. About 8.30 a.m. the serious struggle for this important portion of the battle-field began, and was continued till 1 p.m.

At 10 o'clock the Austrian brigades (Poeckh and Archduke Joseph) were thrown into this part of the

fight, which was then going in favour of Benedek's troops. Both sides fought remarkably well, and once inside the wood the Prussians lost the hitherto overwhelming advantage of the needle-gun, mainly by which they had gained the actions fought during the preceding week. Shortly after 10 a.m., being greatly outnumbered, they were obliged to fall back, in spite of the heroic conduct of their officers, one of whom, Major von Gilsan, who had been wounded several times, led forward three companies of the 2nd battalion of the 26th regiment, and, being held up by a bandsman, continued to command his men, until, absolutely exhausted, he was obliged to go back to the rear, not, however, until, having reformed the surviving effectives, he had thanked his men for their conduct. He died three days afterwards of his wounds.

The Austrians and Prussians were now fighting by single companies, entirely disconnected, and bullets were coming from every direction. Some Austrian battalions reached the Western edge of the wood, while the Prussians were at its Southern boundary, having crossed over their respective tracks during the struggle.

Count Poeckh's brigade had fairly entered the South-east edge of the wood soon after 10.30, its first line being formed of the 8th Rifle battalion and 51st regiment (Archduke Charles Ferdinand). It was at this portion of the thicket that the Austrians were in strongest force; and the main body of Poeckh's brigade colliding with the battalion of the 26th and 27th Prussian regiments, after a severe struggle drove them back in various directions. Meanwhile Colonel Poeckh's left wing encountered some Prussians who

had pressed on to the North of Cistowes, and Poeckh's men, passing behind these, closed the direct line of retreat to the Prussians, who fell back to the Westward, where they held their ground in buildings and meadows near the Bistritz stream.

There had been a great number of casualties on both sides, and all the mounted officers had lost their horses. The effect of Colonel Poeckh's progress in a North-westerly direction was, however, felt throughout the wood, and into its North-eastern corner, where an obstinate fight was still being waged. Not only was Fransecky's division cut in two, but those Germans who retreated into the North-east corner were attacked from Maslowed, being fired on in front, flank, and rear at the same time.

The Prussians still held part of the Northern boundary of the wood, but the companies had got mixed together as the fight swayed backwards and forwards, and it was impossible to maintain any unity of command. Thus the combat degenerated into isolated struggles carried on by officers who put themselves at the head of any soldiers they could collect. These they led again and again into the wood, Fransecky himself, by his personal demeanour, encouraging the soldiers to resist the renewed attack of the enemy. Some Prussian companies, as I have stated above, were driven out of the Western edge, towards the river, while others were pushed into the North-east angle of the wood.

Between 11.30 and 12 the 3rd battalion of the 51st (Hungarian) regiment (Archduke Charles Ferdinand) had worked its way up to the boundary, and driving before it the thin line of its opponents, broke out into the open from the North-west corner

of the wood. All its mounted officers had been struck down, and the battalion had lost the true direction while inside the trees, so when it came into the open, instead of bringing up the left shoulder and pressing on in a North-easterly direction, as it should have done, it turned to the North-west, heading for a small copse in the valley of the Bistritz, near Hnewcowes.

When soldiers have been heavily engaged, and the men have expended nearly all their ammunition, they become liable to panic, but more especially so when taken by surprise. The infantry regiment of the 3rd battalion, which met with this overwhelming disaster, went into action on the 3rd July with 72 officers, and 2559 all other ranks, and had lost in killed and wounded 20 officers and 637 others, before the incident I am about to describe occurred.

Before narrating how this astonishing feat was achieved—a squadron capturing six times its own numbers of fighting men—it may be instructive for cavalry officers to notice how it was employed previous to the 3rd July.

The 10th Magdeburgh Hussar regiment was attached to the 7th (Fransecky's) infantry division. Though not engaged in the previous battles, it had done hard work, squadrons being detached on special duty, but the regiment was re-united on the 29th June, a wing which had been detached to Jicin rejoining during the advance. My young comrades will gather the necessity of strict discipline on service when they learn that on the 29th and 30th the regiment did not reach its bivouac till 11 p.m., while during the night 2nd–3rd July it was practically constantly on the move. It was ordered at midnight to advance to Cerekwitz, and at 2 a.m. reached the

bivouac fires of the outposts, where the men lay down, holding their horses, and so remained till 7.30 a.m., at which time the guns of the 8th division opened fire.

Dealing first of all with the movements of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th squadrons, I may mention that these, posted near, but to the Eastward of Benatek, seeing an Austrian column emerge from the Swiep Wald, and marching on the village, between 10 and 11 a.m., advanced to the attack, and drove it back.

The 1st squadron, detailed as the advanced portion of the advanced guard, 7th division, moved outside, and to the West of the Swiep Wald, conforming to the movements of the infantry, advancing as it gained ground, and falling back with it as the Austrians pushed the Prussians Northwards. At noon the squadron was placed in a hollow road 400 yards to the South-west of Benatek, in order to avoid artillery fire, Captain von Humbert, and his senior subaltern, Count von der Schulenburg, sitting on the hill above. At 1.15 p.m. they saw a body of Austrian infantry straggling out of the wood; they had thrust aside the Prussians opposed to them, and, unconscious of the proximity of other foes, were "marching at ease," with muskets "at the slope." All this was noted by Captain von Humbert, who, with his subaltern, had ridden forward from the hill to reconnoitre the advancing enemy.

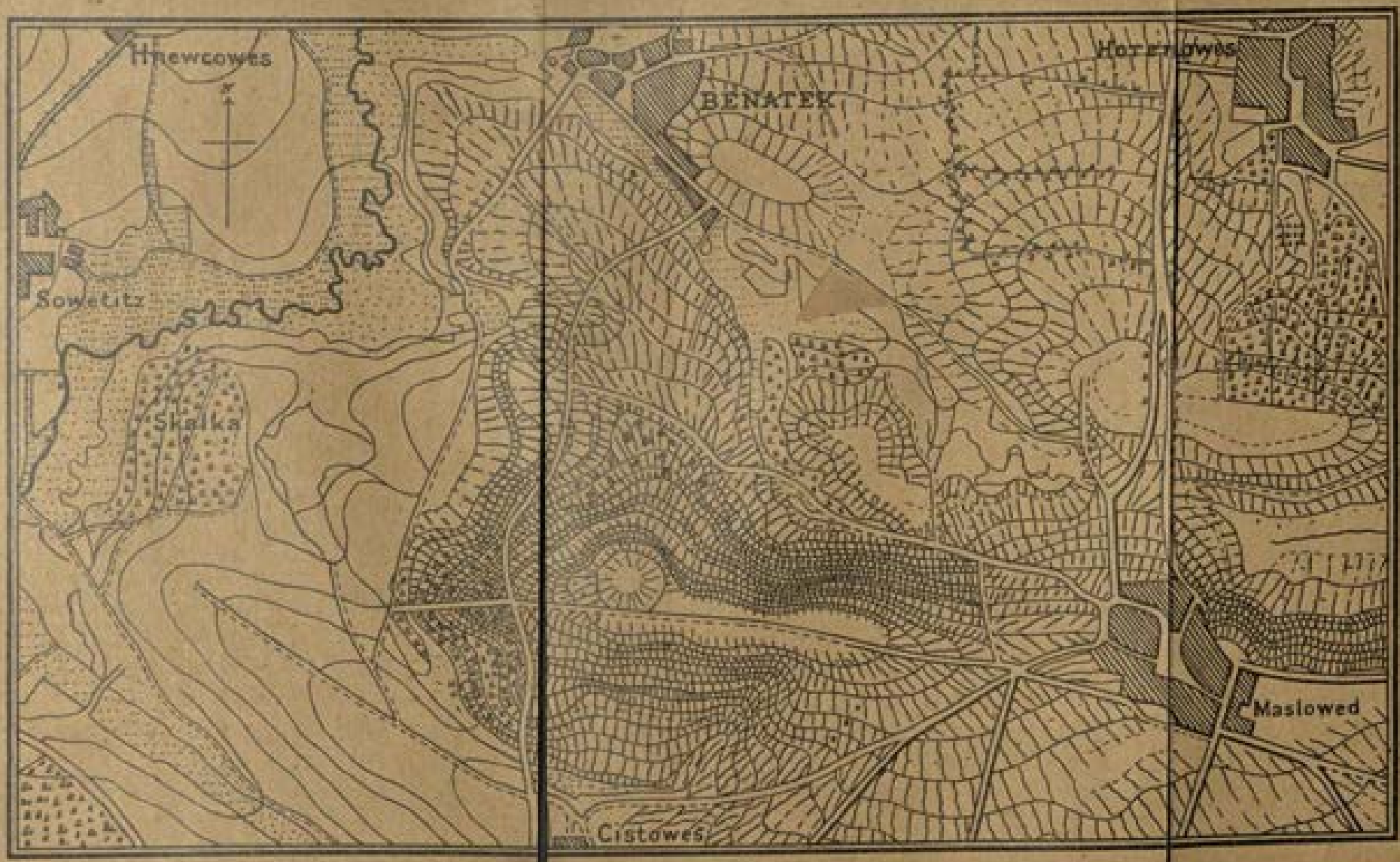
The Prussian officers, returning to the hill, formed up the squadron in perfect silence, and just as the head of the third battalion 51st regiment (Prince Charles Ferdinand) turned to occupy some scattered, low-lying, timber-fenced orchards, von Humbert led his squadron, with closed ranks, at the gallop, against the foe. With shouts of "Ground arms—

Surrender," the Hussars dashed on. A few officers, entirely taken by surprise, obeyed; their example was quickly followed by some of the Rank and File, and in a few minutes every musket was on the ground. The infantry men were then ordered to "Stand clear" of their muskets, and were marched to the village of Benatek, which by this time was in flames. The squadron of the 10th Hussars claims to have captured a Colour and 681 officers and men. This is from the Prussian official account. There is no official Austrian account of this incident, so far as I am aware, and the Regimental History of the Austrian corps, though in course of preparation, has not, up to date,* been published; but it is believed at Vienna that some of the prisoners were taken at different periods and handed over to the first squadron 10th Hussars to be escorted to the rear. The fact, however, cannot be gainsaid that a squadron captured a battalion and a Colour.

Prince Kraft of Hohenlohe Ingelfingen, asserts that the squadron numbered only 101 sabres. This is not likely to have been the case, for it took the field 150 strong, and its casualties were not more than half a dozen up to the 3rd July. Although it had doubtless been called on to detail orderlies and other extra duty men, it had probably 130 in the Ranks.

When the captured battalion marched off, not a man on either side had received a scratch, but now Lieutenant Count von der Schulenburg, seeing another Colour just inside the wood, made a dash for it, being followed by a few Hussars, but he fell, mortally wounded by some Austrian infantry firing from behind trees, and being carried off by his men, died four days later.

* 30th September.



BENATEK, NEAR KÖNIGGRATZ.

ACTION FOUGHT JULY 3RD, 1866.

[To face p. 174

No. X.

TOBITSCHAU,

15th July, 1866.

No. X.

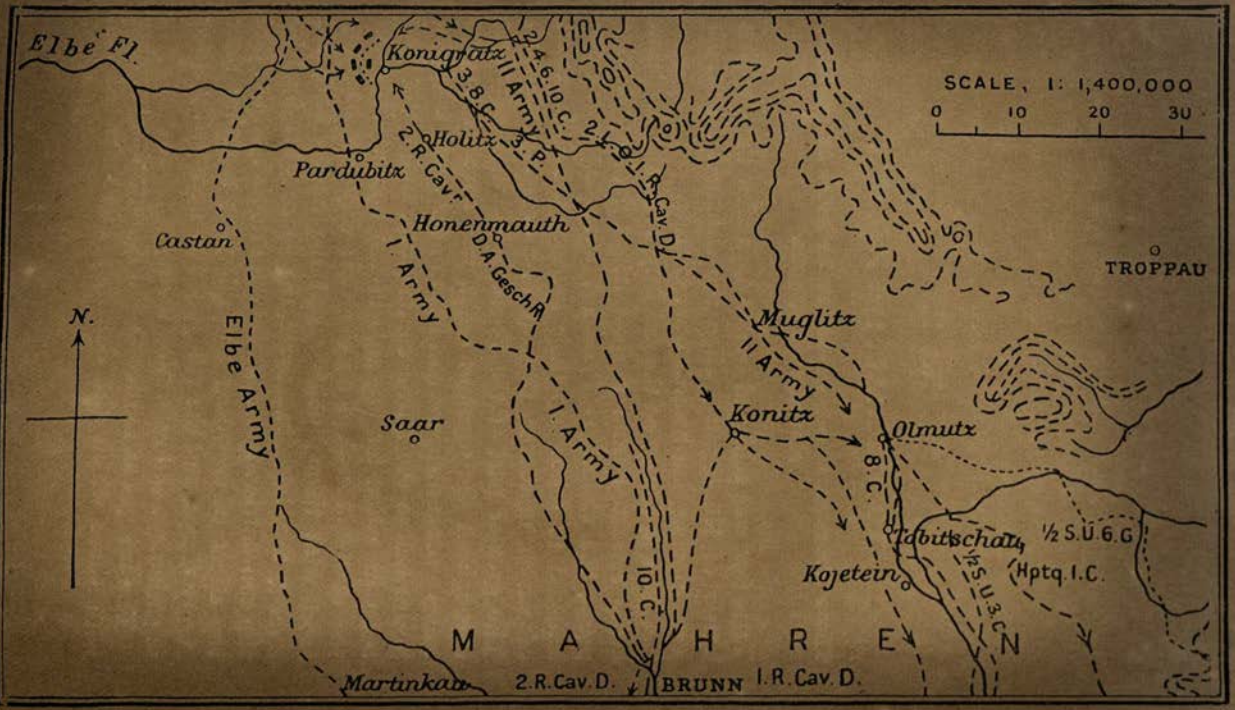
TOBITSCHAU, 15*th July*, 1866.

Three Prussian squadrons attack batteries in position, and capture 18 guns.

THIS feat was achieved twelve days after the decisive battle of Königgrätz, when the defeated Austrians were moving Southwards from Olmutz.

When, at sunset on the 3rd July, 1866, the Austrian army retreated from the disastrous field of Königgrätz, the victorious Prussians were too much exhausted to follow up their success, the full extent of which, moreover, they at first scarcely realized. The greater part of the Prussian infantry, marching throughout the previous night, had covered sixteen miles; some divisions had been under arms nineteen hours before the battle commenced, and many had been in action for upwards of ten hours. None of the men had cooked on the 3rd: very few had any food with them; neither had the horses been fed during the day. Moreover, the success attained by the concentric movements of the Prussian armies had the effect of crowding and mingling together their Army Corps, and the 4th July was necessarily spent in rationing, and reforming them.

The bridges at Pardubitz and Königgrätz, together with those which the Austrian Field-marshal had



THE COUNTRY THROUGH WHICH THE GERMAN ARMIES ADVANCED IN JULY, 1866.

thrown across the Elbe above that fortress, enabled his troops to cross the river without difficulty. One Corps and the greater part of the cavalry fell back directly on Vienna, while the bulk of his army moved on Olmütz; the Austrian Head-quarters remaining in Zwittau, about fifty miles from the battle-field, until mid-day on the 7th July.

On the 6th July, von Hartman's cavalry division, preceding the Second Army (Crown Prince's), reached the Königgrätz-Zwittau road, but it was not until the 8th that touch with formed bodies of the enemy was regained. Even then it was not known at the Prussian Head-quarters what numbers of Austrians had retreated on Vienna and Olmütz respectively.

On the 11th July the Austrian Corps which had concentrated at Olmütz were ordered to retreat to Vienna. The Crown Prince's army had been held back to guard against any offensive movement of the Austrians from Olmütz, but on the 11th, although their intended further retreat was unknown to the Prussians, yet the King approved of the Prince's request to move his army Southwards.

On the 10th and 11th July von Hartman's cavalry division was allowed to halt. It had covered ninety-seven miles in three successive days. Exclusive of lame and sick horses, one-fourth of the division was unfit to move until the horses had rested. One-third of the horses of a Landwehr brigade were lame, chiefly owing to want of shoes. The ground over which the division had marched varied, being sometimes very hard and stony, sometimes of deep, and occasionally stiff clay soil; and, owing to the many hours the division was on the march, there was no opportunity for shoeing up the horses. The cavalry

regiment, with the deeds of which we are immediately concerned, had covered two hundred miles in seven consecutive days, and had bivouaced daily, often in heavy rain. On the 13th July von Hartman's division was billeted in and around Könitz, twenty-five miles due West of Olmütz, Germans, as practical soldiers, preferring the worst billet to the best bivouac.

By the 14th July the Austrians, using the railway, and the roads on either side of the river March, had moved three Corps from Olmütz to Vienna. On that date one Corps passed through Tobitschau, which is twelve miles South of Olmütz, and reached Kojetein, seven miles South of Tobitschau.

The same day von Hartman, writing from Prossnitz, where he had arrived with his advanced guard, reported the movement of considerable forces on the Olmütz-Tobitschau road, and stated further that two cavalry regiments, which had been at Prossnitz since early in the morning, were still in his front. He asked for a reinforcement of infantry, with which he proposed to occupy either Dub, or Prerau, and thus intercept the retreat of the enemy.* After waiting some hours for an answer, he rode back from Kosteletz, his headquarters, to Neustift to personally urge his request with General Steinmetz, who, in forwarding von Hartman's report to the Crown Prince at Könitz, added that he had authorized the advance to Prerau, and suggested that infantry should be sent in support from the 1st Army Corps, which was nearer to Prerau than any of his own troops.

The Crown Prince received these reports on the afternoon of the 14th July, when riding over from

* See map at end of chapter.

Könitz to Neustift to personally present the Order of the Black Eagle to General von Steinmetz. The Prince at once gave orders for the 1st Army Corps to send a brigade of infantry and a battery to occupy the bridges at Tobitschau and Traubeck that evening, in order to support the cavalry moving on Prerau, and if necessary to cover their retreat. These orders were not received until 10.30 p.m., so it was agreed by those who had to carry them out that the movement should be postponed till the 15th. During the afternoon of the 14th July there were skirmishes between the opposing cavalry forces North-east of Prossnitz, and in the dusk of the evening the 1st Prussian Cuirassiers attacked two companies of an Austrian regiment about half a mile to the West of Biskupitz. The Austrians encountered on these occasions were troops covering the flank of the columns marching on the road, Olmütz-Dub-Tobitschau.

Von Benedek received a telegram on the 14th from the Archduke Albrecht, who had been appointed Commander-in-chief on the 13th, enjoining that care should be taken to protect the right flank of the column moving on the Olmütz-Dub-Tobitschau road, but the Field-marshal, failing to realize the adventurous spirit of the Prussian cavalry, considered he had already done all that was necessary for this purpose.

The head of the 8th Corps marched from Olmütz at 2 a.m. on the 15th, and was intended to move "closed up," and to reach Kojetein, seven miles South of Tobitschau, that evening. It was followed at intervals of half an hour by the Corps artillery, Hospital, and Supply columns, the light baggage

only of the combatant troops following them on the Dub-Tobitschau road.

General von Matloki, commanding the Prussian infantry brigade detailed to support the cavalry, marching at 4 a.m., by Prossnitz and Kralitz, reached Hrubschitz before the Horsemen. A squadron of another cavalry division reported to him here, and, preceding the brigade, soon discovered the enemy to be in possession of Tobitschau. From a hill near Hrubschitz, General Matloki saw a long column of the enemy moving through Dub on Tobitschau. This was Rothkirch's, the leading brigade of the 8th Corps. Its right flank was protected by two companies which were marching on the left bank of the Blatta river, but they had not apparently noticed the advance of the Prussians. Matloki now quickened his pace in order to carry Tobitschau before the enemy's column could reach it. When the advanced companies of Matloki's brigade reached the river they found the Wiklitzer Hof, and Klopotowitz unoccupied, but the bridge over the river near the former farm was barricaded. In spite of the fire of Austrian skirmishers posted behind a fence on the river bank, the barricade was removed, and another company having forded the river lower down, and outflanking the Austrian skirmishers, compelled them to withdraw. Further progress was, however, arrested by formed troops lining the fences around a thick wood which was strongly occupied, and from under the cover of which counter-attacks were made on the Prussian infantry.

When General Rothkirch's troops were attacked he asked for the help of the Reserve artillery, and

sixteen guns soon opened fire from a position 500 yards North-east of the wood, on the battery accompanying Matloki's brigade. These guns were joined somewhat later by the two batteries of the cavalry division. The Austrians then brought up another battery, and a company of the left leading Prussian battalion (4th regiment) was directed to attack the guns. It crossed the river, and creeping up to the batteries, in spite of the case-shot directed on the men, compelled them to withdraw. The company now came under the fire of its own artillery, to avoid which it entered the wood, taking part in the attack which was then being made on the Austrians in it from its Southern end. The atmosphere being thick and heavy with moisture, the smoke hung low, and obscured the view of the country near the wood. Under cover of the smoke the Austrians attempted to retake the wood, but failed. There was now a pause in the infantry fight in this part of the field; but during the struggle for the possession of the wood half a Prussian battalion had moved directly against Tobitschau.

When the smoke cleared off it was seen that the Austrians had taken up a fresh position. The infantry were standing in columns covered by thick lines of skirmishers. The artillery, having retired, was in position on the West side of the road, with its left flank at the bend of the road North of the chapel, which stands at the Northern end of Tobitschau.

At 10.30 a.m. the Prussians attacked the Austrians in front and flank, and after a sharp struggle compelled them to retire. They suffered heavily as they

retreated partly Northwards towards Wierowan, and partly across the mill-stream in the direction of the Opleta Wood. The Austrian artillery, although enfiladed by a Prussian battery, which opened from a position East of the high road, and in a line with the North side of it, remained in action, covering the retreat. Now, however, the same company (4th regiment) which had previously attacked the artillery, assisted by another company (44th regiment), crept up to the Austrian batteries and caused them to withdraw. Some of them retreated to the left bank of the river March, but twenty guns took up a fresh position on the hill West of Wierowan.

Description of the Ground where the Guns were captured.—Near Tobitschau the Blatta and several other smaller streams join the March river, and there is a general fall in the ground from Dub to the Southward. From the hill near Wierowan a long spur runs Westward to the Blatta at Biskupitz, the saddle-like feature on which the Austrian artillery were presently captured being twenty-five feet above the river. Though in the valley some meadow-lands are fenced, the richly cultivated and unharvested fields on the spur and saddle near Wierowan were not enclosed by fences of any description. The ditches, however, on either side of the Dub-Tobitschau road are two feet deep and two feet broad.

The banks of the Blatta are marked by willows from four to five feet in height. The stream, in spite of its very muddy bottom, is fordable in places except after rain; but on the day of the action, though it was forded near Tobitschau, it was six

feet deep near Biskupitz, and from six to twenty feet broad, the banks being level with the water in some places, and five feet higher in other parts. The meadows on the Western side of the river are traversed by a brook twelve feet broad and three feet deep. The fragile bridle-bridge, half a mile down stream from Biskupitz, over which, in order to capture the batteries, the Cuirassiers passed in single file, is hidden by a small wood from the Wierowan position, and the undulating features of the ground assisted greatly the Prussians' hazardous attack by concealing the daring horsemen until they were within 200 yards of the guns.

When General von Hartman, passing to the North of his batteries in action, reached Klopotowitz, he ordered the Cuirassier brigade, which was leading, to reconnoitre the river bank, and find a crossing place. This duty fell to the 5th Cuirassiers, whose commanding officer, Major von Bredow, sent the 4th squadron to the front, following himself with the 2nd and 1st squadrons. The 3rd squadron had been previously sent to reconnoitre to the South of Klopotowitz. When the 4th, or leading, squadron reached the river bank, it was met by Lieutenant von Rosenberg, who had been across the stream reconnoitring. He pointed out the light bridge he had found 700 yards South of Biskupitz, and reported that the Austrian batteries in position to the West of Wierowan had apparently no escort.

The 2nd squadron was the first to cross over the bridge, passable in single file only, and formed up 200 yards South of it, while its leading section extended in the direction of the batteries. As soon as the 1st, or rear squadron was across, one troop was detached

from it in a Northerly direction towards Dub, to cover the left flank, for Major von Bredow had determined to attack at once. While the 2nd and 1st squadrons crossed the bridge the leading troop * of the Contact squadron fired on the Austrian batteries from under cover of a field of poppies then in full bloom. The Austrian gunners at first imagined the individual horsemen they saw on their right front were Austrian cavalry, but just before the charge they fired a few rounds at the troop of Cuirassiers skirmishing in their front.

When all three squadrons (strength about 400 sabres) were across the river, von Bredow, who had formed up under the cover of a fold of the ground, advanced in squadron columns, the 2nd squadron leading, the 4th squadron in support on the left flank, and the 1st squadron in reserve in rear of the right flank. The 2nd squadron, followed by four troops of the 4th squadron, moved at the gallop at first in a North-easterly direction, ascending a shallow valley out of sight of the enemy. When it got within 500 yards of the right flank of the Austrian guns, the order was given, "Front turn, in extended order—Charge," and the horsemen entered the batteries directly in their front. At the same moment the 4th troop of the 4th squadron attacked directly to its front from the poppy field, striking the left flank of the Austrian guns, while the 1st squadron advanced in echelon as a reserve, so as to meet any possible attack by the Austrian supports.

In a few minutes the squadrons were inside the

* By order of the general commanding the cavalry division, the squadrons 5th Cuirassiers were, prior to crossing the Austrian frontier, divided into five troops, the horses received from farmers on mobilisation forming the 5th troop.

batteries, two guns only of which had time to fire one round of case-shot when the impending attack was perceived. One battery which had not yet unlimbered made off at once, and some of the guns in action on the left limbered up and retreated, till they were stopped by the ditch bordering the road. A few teams galloped off without "limbering up." All the guns, however, except two which managed to escape, were eventually taken, in spite of a determined resistance on the part of the detachments. A half-company, numbering seventy all Ranks, acting as escort, was ridden over, cut down or taken prisoners, with the exception of one section, which, holding together, escaped, and rejoined the two guns, and these, having evaded capture, bravely reopened fire. Von Bredow now dismounting two squadrons, ordered them to prepare to carry off the guns. While they were thus employed, the Austrian Headquarter escort, advancing through Nenakowitz to retake the guns, was attacked by the 1st squadron, led by von Bredow himself, and driven back with a loss of some prisoners.

The regiment took 18 guns (one so disabled that it was necessarily left on the field), 15 limbers, 7 ammunition waggons, 2 officers, 168 artillerymen, 230 of other corps, and 157 horses; while its own casualties were only 10 privates and 6 horses wounded, and 12 horses killed. By 11 a.m. von Hartman's division assembled on the left bank of the Blatta, and supported the infantry attack on Wierowan, and in the mean time arrangements were made for sending forward infantry in country carts to support the cavalry advance on Prerau. By nightfall the Austrians were pushed back over the March river.

Comments.—This action shows how difficult it is for artillery, in broken ground, when unprovided with escort, to repulse a determined cavalry attack; but there are several other valuable lessons to be learnt in the handling of the opposing forces, from circumstances incidental to this brilliant and successful charge.

I have been unable to ascertain the reasons which induced von Field-marshal Benedek to move not only the Reserve artillery (8th Corps), but also the Hospital trains, on the Western, or exposed bank of the March river. The road is better than that on the Eastern bank, but this hardly justified the risk incurred by crowding vehicles on it. If it were desirable to run such risk, an adequate escort should have been detailed, and arrangements made for the Command, and the Staff duties of all troops on the road, for, from want of such, there were many gaps in the columns. These were caused to some extent by the waggon train, which had been ordered to move on the Eastern bank of the river March, missing its road and cutting into the column of route of the 8th Corps. Moreover the three squadrons of Lancers preceding the march of the 8th Austrian Corps were at Annadorf, South of Tobitschau, when Matloki's brigade approached that place, and, although they scouted in a South-westerly direction, they nevertheless failed to report the advance of the Prussians from the North-west. On the 3rd July the Austrian cavalry had given proofs of the most devoted courage in covering retreating infantry, but it is evident their reconnoitring duties on the 15th July were badly done.

General Rothkirch had seen General Matloki's force when it was approaching Klopotowitz, but

mistook it for von Kreysern's cavalry brigade, which had been ordered to cover his right flank. Von Kreysern was, however, at that moment near Seilendorf, seven miles to the North-eastward, or in the right rear. The Austrian official account* complains of the absence of information from the cavalry.

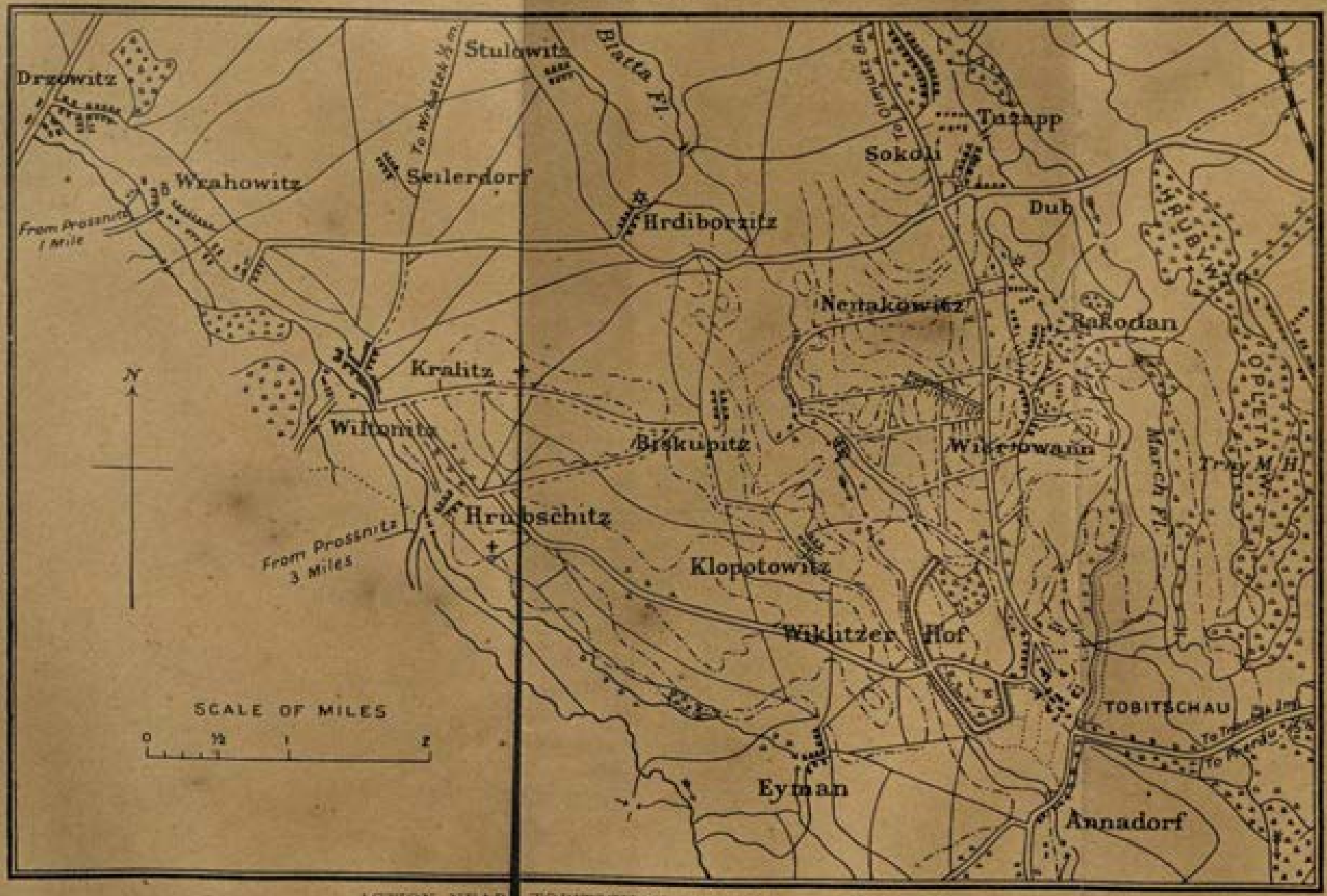
Benedek overtook the Hospital train and Corps artillery, near Dub, between 9 and 10 a.m., whence he witnessed the struggle between Rothkirch's and Matloki's brigades. The Field-marshal and his Staff saw the Prussian Cuirassiers advance from Klopotowitz and disappear in the low ground near the river, and assumed that the troops near Wierowan must also have seen them. The weak infantry escort, seventy of all Ranks, was too far back in rear to influence the fight for the guns. If it had been posted on the hill overlooking the Blatta, the Prussian cavalry could scarcely have crossed the river. The Head-quarter cavalry escort, which if sent forward earlier might possibly have saved the batteries, came up after they were taken.

On the Prussian side we notice that a very enterprising cavalry Leader, of a division, urged he might be supported by infantry ere he crossed rivers over which he might have to retreat. We read also that a cavalry regiment having been detached to the front, its commanding officer there grasps a favourable opportunity for attack, and disregarding all risks attendant on it, passes a regiment by single file over a rotten bridle-bridge spanning an unfordable river, with no assured line of retreat available. There was no sending back for orders, and the general, who knew

* Used partly in this narrative.

his man, and who was watching his advance across the river, at once divined his intentions, and by opening a rapid fire on the Austrian gunners, diverted their attention from the impending attack.

Finally, we see how a startling success was obtained with trifling loss to the victors, by a skilful, resolute Leader, who knew how to utilize broken ground, and whose soldiers followed as bravely as he led.



ACTION NEAR TOBITSCHAU—FOUGHT 15TH JULY, 1866.

[To face p. 170.

No. XI.

MARS-LA-TOUR,

16th August, 1870.

No. XI.

MARS-LA-TOUR, *16th August*, 1870.

A cavalry regiment, with self-sacrificing devotion, extricates a defeated infantry brigade, saves several batteries of artillery, and checks the advance of 5000 men.*

THE decisive victory of Königgratz placed Prussia in the position of the first military Power, and this irritated France, since it displaced her from that proud position. There was, moreover, an additional grievance in the minds of the leading men in Paris, who had gathered from the speeches of Prussian diplomatists that France, in return for her neutrality during the war of 1866, and the efforts of her Rulers to bring about a satisfactory peace, would receive some actual compensation of territory.

The year after the conclusion of the war between Prussia and Austria, the King of Holland, as Duke of Luxembourg, offered to sell that territory to France, in spite of a strong protest made by Prussia. The British minister, however, intervened, and in consequence of his diplomacy, Luxembourg became a neutral State, and thus for a time war was averted.

In 1870, however, a fresh cause of offence was given, when a Hohenzollern prince was nominated

* In estimating these numbers I assume a strength five per centum less than that with which the troops took the field.

for the then vacant Spanish throne. Now, although France had everything to gain from delay, yet her principal ministers allowed the Press to goad the people into a warlike spirit, and a somewhat insulting demand was addressed to the King of Prussia, to the effect that he should disapprove of the action of the prince for having accepted the throne without his previous permission, and order him to withdraw his candidature. This the king refused to do, and on the 11th July, when the same demand was renewed in a more pressing fashion, it was again refused. Later in the day it transpired that the prince had withdrawn his candidature. The King of Prussia notified this fact to the French Ambassador, Count Benedetti, causing him to be informed that he, the king, now considered the matter at an end; but, on the evening of the 12th, the French Cabinet telegraphed to their representative, "It is necessary that the king should assure us that he will not again authorize this candidature"; and when, on the 13th, Count Benedetti sought a second audience on the same subject with the king, he was referred to the Prussian Minister of Foreign Affairs. Benedetti left for Paris on the 14th July, and at 3 p.m. the same day an order was issued calling out the French Reserves. Action was, however, postponed till early next day, but on the 19th the French representative with the Prussian Government presented a Declaration of war, and this was done before any concentration of the French army had been effected!

The Emperor's plan assumed that the strength of the field army with which the French would have to deal might be taken as 550,000 men, while their own might be reckoned as 300,000, but he hoped that by

rapid movements he might cross the Upper Rhine, separate South and North Germany, and thus have to encounter only 350,000 combatants. It was anticipated that, if Prussia could be isolated, at the first success, Austria and Italy would join France. There were, however, grave miscalculations in all these plans.

The field army of Prussia amounted to 520,000 men, with 1500 guns; while the greatest number that the French were able to bring into line was 260,000 men. Although there was a total of nearly 4000 rifled-cannon and machine-guns, yet there were only men and horses for 164 batteries, of which, when the war broke out, 10 were still in Algeria and Civita Vecchia, and in the result only 924 pieces, including machine guns, were sent into the field. This enumeration, however, tells but little of the vast disparity in efficiency between the opposing forces. The French army was not only but half as strong as its opponents, but each day after the 19th July showed its appalling want of preparation. The railways, overburdened with men and stores, were unable to transport the Reservists to the depôts, or from thence to the troops. Numberless mistakes occurred, and a graphic proof of the confusion is shown by the following telegram from the Commander of the territorial district at Marseilles, to the War Minister: "9000 Reservists here. I do not know what to do with them. In order to gain room, propose to ship them on board transports now in harbour, and send to Algeria."

It is not, then, astonishing that we find the Reserves joined their battalions without being properly equipped; and that many of them were without

cooking utensils, water bottles, or *tentes d'abri.** Moreover, it was not only the Combatant branches which were without organization, but the Auxiliary services were in the same condition, and both Corps and Regimental transport was incomplete. There was a deficiency as regards Horses, Ambulances, Commissariat Transport, Bearer companies, and Veterinary surgeons, many of the divisions having none at all. A great part of the harness of the Artillery train did not fit the horses, and at many stations there was no machine-gun equipment. The troops hurried forward to the frontier were given considerable quantities of maps, but only of the country East of the Rhine, and none were provided for the French frontier districts, where all the fighting occurred during the first month.

Not only was the Field army deficient of warlike stores and food stuffs, but the great fortresses, such as Metz, Mézières, and Sedan, were short of biscuit and preserved meat. When, on the 28th July, ten days after the declaration of war, the Emperor, Napoleon III., arrived at Metz, he realized that his army of 260,000 men, spread along the frontier from Belfort in the South to Tionville in the North, on a frontage of about 150 miles, was in no condition to advance, and that it was necessary to resign the initiative to his opponents. Nothing, however, was done at first to draw the French corps closer together, and on the 4th August the first disaster, that at Wissembourg, occurred to a portion of McMahon's command, which two days later was utterly defeated at Worth. On the same day the French were driven back, by numerically inferior

* Shelter tents.

forces, from Spicheren, near Saarbrück, and, eight days later, although for a time the French held the advantage at Borny—an action fought three miles to the Eastward of the fortress of Metz—yet the result was the same, for the retirement was resumed at nightfall. The Achievements I am now about to describe occurred two days later, to the Westward of Metz, where numerically inferior infantry and cavalry of Prussia, by audacious tactics, delayed the retirement of the French army until it could be overtaken by the German Army Corps coming up from the Southward.

On the morning of the 16th August, 1870, the French army was awaiting orders to resume its march towards Verdun, when, at 9 a.m., General von Alvensleben, arriving from the Moselle with Horse artillery batteries, opened fire from the hill near Tronville, on the French camps. From that hour till 6 p.m. the Germans fought against enormously superior numbers. Till late in the afternoon the struggle had been carried on by the Germans mainly with artillery, but about 5.30 p.m. the 1st Dragoon Guards regiment was called on to sacrifice itself, under the following circumstances, in order to save the positions on the left of the French position :—

The 38th infantry brigade had arrived at Mars-la-Tour,* after a march of twenty-seven miles. Having rested an hour, it went forward at 5 p.m. to attack the French troops in position to the North-east of that village. The Commanders on either side, in this part of the field, regarded the course of the battle at this hour in different aspects, for while General

* See map, No. XIX., at end of chapter xii.

L'Admirault imagined that he was barely in sufficient strength to maintain his position, General von Voights Rhetz considered that the dangerous situation of the troops in and about the Tronville copses necessitated a demonstration being made to the Westward of those woods.

Description of the Ground.—The country about Mars-la-Tour may be described generally as an undulating plain. Immediately to the East and North-east of the village there were small fields fenced by insignificant ditches, but with hedges sufficiently thick to break the formation of troops, and oblige them to pass these obstacles at gaps and other openings. Further from the village the fields were unfenced, but some were at this time covered with standing crops about five feet in height, while on others the cut corn was standing in shocks. About a mile and a half North of Mars-la-Tour, a ravine with steep sides runs East and West, in some places nearly fifty feet deep.

When the 38th infantry brigade went forward, the batteries, which had already been some time in action on both flanks, supported its advance. The batteries on the right were protected by two squadrons of the 4th Cuirassiers, while the 1st Dragoon Guards regiment had been left as an escort to the batteries in action to the Eastward of Mars-la-Tour. Although the infantry came under a hot fire immediately they reached the bare hill to the North-east of the village, in spite of it, the firing line advanced quickly by rushes of alternate units, and at first without serious loss. As they descended the Northern slope of the hill, however, and from thence on until they reached the edge of the ravine, men fell thickly. This hollow had not

been reconnoitred, and the obstacle was unexpected. Nevertheless, encouraged by the Supports which had now joined the firing line, all five battalions, crossing without hesitation, surmounted the Northern crest. Here, however, the brigade came under fire of a line of infantry within one hundred yards' range. The struggle lasted but a few minutes, when the Prussians fell back through the ravine, to the Northern crest only of which the French followed. The Germans, exhausted by their previous efforts, failed in many cases to reascend; several were shot down, and three hundred were made prisoners at one place. The brigade retreated on Tronville, and General von Brandenburg was directed to send forward his dragoons to cover the retreat, and save the artillery, which had remained in its advanced position to assist the overwhelmed infantry.

About 6 p.m., when the feat I am about to describe was achieved, the following was the situation:—

The remnants of the 38th brigade (65 out of 95 officers, and 2600 other ranks out of 4500 had fallen) were retreating in confusion. The 16th regiment was broken up, and the 57th regiment was being closely pursued by the 13th, and 43rd French regiments, while a long line of French infantry stood on the Northern crest of the ravine with a battery of machine-guns on its right, or Western flank. Two miles to the right rear a cavalry division was seen forming up. The German batteries were still in action from 1000 to 1500 yards from the ravine, and were maintaining their position, although the French had got to within 400 yards of their guns.* When the

* In some recent narratives the batteries are shown to have been in much more advanced positions.

38th infantry brigade attacked there was absolutely no Reserve at Mars-la-Tour, except these batteries, and the cavalry regiment acting as their escort.

The 1st Dragoon Guards had left its bivouac at Beaumont, 18 miles South-south-west of Mars-la-Tour, at 4.30 a.m., on the 16th August,* and picking up two squadrons which had been employed on outpost duty, marched by St. Hilaire to Mars-la-Tour, about 35 miles, where the regiment arrived at 1.30 p.m. It had twice moved up to the North-west of Mars-la-Tour to check the advance of French troops, but at 5 p.m. was in position, in support of artillery, to the Eastward of the village.

It was about 5.30 p.m. when General von Voights Rhetz, galloping down the Vionville road from Tronville, accosted General Count von Brandenburg, commanding the 3rd Guard cavalry brigade, and ordered an attack. Von Brandenburg pointed out that he had only one regiment at his disposal, the other having been detached to the Westward. He urged, moreover, that if he was bound to attack, the moment for delivering the charge should be left to him, as he had now in his front a very large force of the enemy in compact formation. Voights Rhetz answered, "I don't expect the regiment to succeed, but if it can only check the enemy's advance, and give us ten minutes' breathing time, it will have fulfilled its mission, even if it falls to the last man." Von Brandenburg rode up to the regiment, and explaining briefly but clearly the order, and the situation which necessitated the sacrifice, exclaimed, "God be with you, colonel! I shall accompany you." The adjutant, who had gone forward to reconnoitre, at

* See map, No. XIX., at end of chapter xii.

this moment returned, and reported the position of the advancing foe, and the difficulties to be anticipated in crossing the fields near the village.

Colonel von Auserwald, who had previously sent out ground scouts, leaving the fourth squadron with the guns, and in charge of the regimental Standard, moved off in column of divisions * at the trot, the fifth squadron leading, followed by the third, and lastly, the first squadron—in all 426 sabres.

Coming under the fire of the battery of machine-guns in action on the Northern side of the ravine above-mentioned, the regiment was further embarrassed by the difficulty in getting over the fences, and thus formation and distances were lost, in spite of all efforts to keep the regiment together. When the head of the leading squadron was clear of the broken ground, it moved at first nearly due North across the front of the advancing line, as if to gain the right flank of its foes. The regiment was threatened on the left front by the advance of the 5th battalion of French Rifles, while clouds of skirmishers who were preceding the 13th regiment fired into it from the right, at 600 yards' range. The head of the column had scarcely cleared the fenced-in fields when the colonel sounded the gallop, which was continued till No. 1—*i.e.* the rearmost squadron—had got into the open, when the troops wheeled into line by sound of trumpet, and advanced directly on the 13th regiment. The three battalions composing it were moving forward, covered by skirmishers, and were followed at fifty paces distance by the 43rd regiment. The Dragoons now for the first time began to fall rapidly under the close and

* Equivalent to column of troops to-day.

heavy fire poured in on them from all sides. The Brigadier-general, Count von Brandenberg, accompanied the right squadron, which had its right aligned on the St. Marcel track, to the Southward of which rode two squadrons of the 4th Cuirassiers. These two squadrons, which had been acting as escort to the batteries in action to the West of the Tronville copses, moved forward in direct echelon to the 1st Dragoon Guards; but coming under an overwhelming machine-gun and rifle fire, did not penetrate the enemy's ranks. Their charge, however, extricated a German battery which must otherwise have been taken. Meanwhile the 1st Dragoons increased their pace, and rode over the French skirmishers, who either ran in on the 13th regiment, or threw themselves on the ground.* Both lines formed groups, firing two volleys before the horsemen reached them, the infantry remaining calm, and under perfect control.

When Colonel von Auserwald was within eighty yards of the 13th regiment (riding himself with his Staff well in front of the advancing squadrons), he sounded the charge, and the men, cheering, closed on the enemy. At this moment the colonel, major, and all three squadron leaders were either killed or mortally wounded, but the dust and smoke was so thick, that those men of the squadrons who escaped the volleys, disappeared from the sight of both friends and foes.

That the squadron leaders not only led, but *commanded* their men is manifest. The fifth squadron leader, Captain Prince Reuss, when near the hostile

* When in another charge further to the Westward Dragoons were unable to reach with their swords the agile French infantry soldiers extended on the ground, there were frequent shouts amongst the German horsemen to call up Lancer regiments.

lines, and riding sixty paces in front, was seen to turn several times in the saddle, and signal with his sword for the left flank to come up. Just before the men closed with their foes, he, giving a loud cheer, dashed into one of the French groups and fell dead. Next morning his horse, badly wounded, was found standing close to the prince's body.

Some of those who escaped rejoined only after midnight at Xonville, to which place, four miles in rear, the regiment retired to get water for the horses. Many of the survivors, however, rallied to the South-west of Mars-la-Tour at sunset, but practically without leaders, who were nearly all left extended on the field. The colonel reached the Rallying point, and was just able to thank the survivors, and hand over the command of the regiment to the captain commanding the squadron in reserve, ere, a dying man, he was helped off his horse. The three squadrons lost fifteen officers and 123 other ranks, and 216 horses killed or wounded. This loss, though heavy, was well worth the sacrifice, for it enabled the shattered 38th infantry brigade to rally; the French advance was arrested, and the Prussian batteries were enabled to withdraw South of the Vionville-Mars-la-Tour road, whence they again opened fire on the French, who retired to the Northern bank of the ravine.

Comments.—This is a remarkable instance of combined tactics. All three Arms were employed. The infantry was used recklessly. The artillery and cavalry were deliberately sacrificed to the advantage of the army, and of the wisdom of this sacrifice there can be no doubt. The artillery helped to extricate the infantry, and were in turn saved by the heroic

devotion of three squadrons, whose charge stopped the advance of 5000 infantry, armed with the Chassepôt rifle, a good modern weapon. In spite of the heavy artillery and rifle fire, under which the advance and charge were executed, the fact that there were only 138 human casualties, shows the difficulty of hitting a moving target in battle. The greatest loss occurred just before the horsemen reached the French groups, but several men were shot after they had passed through towards the rear. From the great difference in the casualties of men and horses, it appears, firstly, that the French fired steadily, and not over the heads of the men charging; secondly, that the tendency is to fire at the horse instead of the rider, so as to get the larger target. The smoke, dust, and general confusion favoured wounded and dismounted men, of whom many escaped. Some rode back safely down the ravine, notwithstanding both crests being occupied by the French. Though Colonel von Auserwald was mortally wounded, and within the French position, he rode back at the walk, and without being again hit.

The adjutant's horse, shot through the jaw, and through both hips, fell, as if dead, on its rider. He caught another horse, which dropped dead as he got into the saddle; and a third, on which he was following up the charge, was killed. Late that night his own charger, which he had left as dead, found its way to the bivouac, and recovering, was some weeks afterwards again fit for duty. The adjutant escaped on foot to Mars-la-Tour, where he found, and appropriated, a vehicle standing without a driver, and thus rejoined the remnant of the regiment.

No. XII.

REZONVILLE,

16th August, 1870.

No. XII.

REZONVILLE, *16th August*, 1870.

Six squadrons charge in order to relieve overpowered infantry, and in wrecking six batteries and dispersing four battalions, check the advance of an Army Corps.

ALTHOUGH many accounts of this grand deed, which took place on the 16th August, 1870, have been published, it is necessary, in order to render my narrative clear, that I should explain briefly the movements of the contending forces; I shall, however, endeavour to confine detailed descriptions of what occurred near Rezonville to the cavalry forces which were engaged around that village, and to those corps on which their attacks were made.

Description of Ground.—The road from Metz to Verdun, passing by the villages of Rezonville, Vionville, and Mars-la-Tour,* runs through an open country, the fields being unfenced except near villages and farms. The villages named above, and Flavigny, stand in shallow valleys, located therein probably for convenience of water supply; the country around them is generally undulating, in some places hilly, and is intersected by hollows and watercourses. The summits of the hills are generally flattened or Mamelon-shaped. The ground slopes generally from East to West; a broad ridge running from North to South, forms the most commanding part of

* See map, No. XIX., at end of chapter.

the battle-field. This plateau is bounded:* On the North—by "the old Roman road," and on the South—by the Bois de Vionville. The ridge, narrowing in breadth to a few hundred yards immediately West of Rezonville, sends out a spur for about three-quarters of a mile in a South-westerly direction, *i.e.* between Vionville and Flavigny. The battle-field, for the purpose of this narrative, is surrounded: On the North—by the "old Roman road"; on the East—by the Jurée brook, which runs from North to South, three-quarters of a mile to the Eastward of Rezonville; on the South—by the woods which run close up to the cultivated ground, and cover the slopes of the ravines running down to the Moselle; and on the West—by a North and South line drawn through Tronville. The copses of that name, which run in a North-westerly direction from Vionville, afforded good cover for the German cavalry in the early part of the day. They consist of two adjacent woods with much thick undergrowth. There is a broad open space dividing the South-western and smaller copse from the larger wood, in which there is a wide clearing which separates this thicket into two parts. The villages named above (Vionville had 400 inhabitants) contained massive stone-built houses standing close together, tile-roofed, and surrounded with orchards and gardens which are enclosed by walls and hedges—the isolated farms being similarly enclosed. The roads are generally sound and good. The depressions in the ground afforded cover from view, and the ditches on the Metz-Verdun roadside, though shallow, gave concealment for riflemen. Except on pasture lands near

* See map, No. XX., at end of chapter.

the villages, the fields were laid down in roots and cereals. Some of the latter had been cut, but on others the harvest was still in shocks on the ground.

The 16th August was bright and cloudless, and even by 9 a.m. it was oppressively hot, so that the German infantry suffered considerably in ascending the closed-in roads which lead up from the Moselle.

It was intended that the 3rd cavalry division should cross the Moselle, below Metz, on the 13th August, and push out towards Briey, which is twelve miles North of Vionville, while the 5th cavalry division was directed to cross the river above the fortress, and gain the Metz-Verdun road, and it was thence to reconnoitre, and ascertain the movements of the French army. The 3rd division, from want of bridging materials, failed to get over the Moselle, and was eventually employed elsewhere. The 5th division, commanded by Lieutenant-general von Rheinhaben, crossed, and on the night of the 14th August bivouaced, the 13th brigade (Redern) at Beney, the 11th brigade (Barby) at Thiaucourt, and the 12th brigade (Bredow) at Pont à Mousson, being respectively 12, 14, and 18 miles to the Southward of Vionville.

15*th August.*—The leading infantry division 10th Corps was intended to move on St. Hilaire, and the 5th cavalry division attached to it was to strike the Verdun road 15 miles West of Vionville, and then turn Eastward. Von Redern's brigade, which was leading, left one regiment at Beney, and marched at 3.30 a.m. in a thick fog to Lachaussé, whence two squadrons were sent towards the Metz-Verdun road. General von Barby halted his brigade (the 11th) at Thiaucourt to await the arrival of von Bredow,

sending one regiment to Dommartin, 8 miles South-west of Vionville, to protect von Redern's flank. While von Redern was awaiting the return of the squadrons sent Northwards, he reconnoitred towards Xonville, and was fired on by the flankers of Prince Murat's brigade (De Forton's cavalry division) then on the march from Metz to Mars-la-Tour. The French dragoons skirmished with von Redern's men, till a Prussian battery came up, and then retired, and the Germans, following on from the high ground, saw De Forton's division, with 12 guns, just then halting near Mars-la-Tour. Von Redern now retired three-quarters of a mile, and when his brigade, called up by the sound of the guns, had re-assembled, he advanced towards Mars-la-Tour, but again drew off without a fight. During this skirmish 2 squadrons of the 11th Hussars rejoined von Redern; they had advanced by Buxières as far as Rezonville, and had captured 9 prisoners, whom they brought away, although pursued by some of Murat's brigade. Bredow's brigade (12th) had gone into bivouac at noon at Thiaucourt, when an orderly brought the news that the enemy was in force near Puxieux, 10 miles distant. This place was reached at a rapid trot by two o'clock, by which time 34 squadrons and 2 Horse artillery batteries had assembled there, and bivouaced. The 12th brigade at Suzemont was astride of the high road 6½ miles West of Vionville, and the 11th (Barby) and the 13th brigades (von Redern) at Xonville—all covering their bivouacs with a quarter of their strength on outposts. The 12th brigade had been 12 hours in the saddle, had marched 27 miles, 10 being covered at a rapid pace, and neither men nor horses received any rations that day.

As the 5th cavalry division was intended to join hands with the 3rd cavalry division near Briey, and had not been informed of the failure of the latter to cross the Moselle, von Bredow when going into bivouac sent a squadron of the 16th Lancers by Mars-la-Tour to Jarny, four miles further North, whence the squadron was to send patrols to meet the expected patrols of the 3rd cavalry division. This squadron coming across Du Barail's cavalry division, retired, losing 16 men out of one troop,* and rejoined the regiment at 9 p.m. At 7 o'clock, as the 1st squadron had not returned the 2nd squadron advanced towards Vionville, as far as the Tronville hill, to look for it, and then halted in a hollow, whence patrols were sent towards Vionville, and the Tronville copses. These patrols were fired on from the Vionville-Tronville road, but ascertained that the copses were unoccupied. The squadron of the 7th Cuirassiers, on duty in support of the outposts, now came forward, drove back the French, who were firing on the Lancers, and captured an artisan on his way to Verdun, who gave information of the movements of the French army which was subsequently proved to be accurate. The horses were not unsaddled, but the night passed without the cavalry division being further disturbed.

While the German cavalry division had thus carefully covered its front by outposts, the French, lying in bivouac immediately to the West of Vionville on either side of the high road, contented themselves as regards security by placing an outpost to the Westward close to their bivouac, and a squadron at Flavigny, a mile to the South-east of Vionville. De Forton

* Quarter of a squadron.

reported that he had successfully skirmished against cavalry supported by infantry in Puxieux, whereas the nearest German Infantry, *i.e.* the 38th brigade, was at Thiaucourt, 10 miles further to the South.

On the night of the 15th August the position of those portions of the French army with which we are concerned was as follows:—

Du Barail's cavalry division had reached Jarny, four miles due North of Mars-la-Tour, De Forton's cavalry division was bivouaced at Vionville, Murat's brigade being North of the high road, and close to the Western side of the houses. The 6th Corps (Canrobert's) and the 2nd (Frossard's) were West of Rezonville, and respectively North and South of the Metz-Verdun road. The Reserve artillery of the 2nd Corps was between Gravelotte and Rezonville, and the Guard reached Gravelotte after dark. The Emperor had anticipated that the army would be further advanced on its way to Verdun, but its march had been delayed by the crowded state of the roads leading out of Metz; there were four available, but two roads only were used; and there was futher delay caused by the leading columns waiting for the two Corps in the rear, which halted to replenish their supply of ammunition. Orders were issued for the troops to be ready to march at 4.30 a.m. on the 16th, and it was notified that they would probably encounter, during the day, about 30,000 Germans.

16th August.—At 5 a.m. orders were issued postponing the move until the afternoon, and it was intimated that no attack was to be feared from the North or right flank, danger being anticipated only from the direction of Gorze. At 6 a.m. the Emperor left Gravelotte for Verdun, desiring Bazaine to march

as soon as possible for that place. General Forton's division was saddled up ready to move at 5 o'clock, but the order was countermanded. The outposts twice reported the approach of the enemy's cavalry and artillery, but an officer of the Staff who was sent to verify these reports discredited their importance, and orders were consequently given in the Cavalry division for the men to cook, and to send three out of four squadrons in each regiment to water the horses. At 8.30 a.m. the Regimental commanders in the 2nd Corps (Frossard's) received the following notices: "Cavalry patrols have returned, and report no signs of the enemy in force. The troops can cook."

General De Forton had several times ascended the crest of the hill under which the leading brigade of his division was bivouaced, and was there with Prince Murat at 8.40 a.m., when, seeing an attack was imminent, he sent an order for his artillery to come up to where he was standing. Before the order could be carried out, he and the outpost squadron were obliged to retreat rapidly before the advancing Germans.

The German Staff had assumed, from the fact of two French Corps only having fought at Borny to the Eastward of Metz on the 14th, and from all the indications gleaned from the outposts, that the French were retreating towards the Meuse as rapidly as possible. Von Moltke wrote on the 15th, "It is only by a vigorous offensive movement of the 2nd Army upon the road from Metz to Verdun, that we can reap the fruits of yesterday's victory." These views induced the movements of the 5th cavalry division shown above. General Rheinhaben reported on the evening of the 15th to General von Voights Rhetz, commanding the 10th Army Corps, to which he

was attached, his own strength and what had been seen of the French forces; and received orders to advance against the French outposts with all or part of his division, as he might judge best, after being strengthened by two Horse artillery batteries which Lieut.-colonel Caprivi, Chief Staff officer, led up from Thiaucourt at 6 a.m., escorted by two squadrons 2nd Guard Dragoons, and one squadron 16th Hussars. These batteries worked with two others under command of Major von Körber, and at 8.30 a.m. formed up with the 13th cavalry brigade, the men of which had been standing to the horses, near Puxieux, ready to advance since 6 a.m. The 12th brigade (von Bredow), also held in readiness since daybreak, formed up in two lines of squadron columns at 9 a.m. in the valley running North-west from Vionville, in which they were hidden from view.

The Horse artillery now moved at the trot, covered by a battery, and three squadrons with double intervals, which marched 300 yards in front. The remainder of the 13th brigade (von Redern) followed in rear of either flank, while the advanced guard regiment, getting into the low ground where the ravines from Gorze and Flavigny—running up to Vionville—meet, sent parties to the higher ground further to the Southward. Schirmer's, the advanced battery, came into action at the gallop on the high ground to the Eastward of Tronville, at 8.30 a.m. opening fire on Murat's bivouac at 1500 yards range, not a single French patrol having up to this time been seen. The other three batteries, coming up at full speed prolonged the line, the left resting on the Tronville-Vionville road. The 11th Hussars descended into the ravine behind the right rear of the batteries

while the 17th Hussars, and two squadrons 2nd Guard Dragoons, took cover due North of Tronville.

The first shell burst among some transport hired for the Reserve artillery, which made off as quickly as possible towards Metz. At this moment more country vehicles, carrying the baggage of De Forton's division, were coming from the Rear into the bivouac, and these waggons colliding with those retiring, produced an inextricable confusion. The civilian drivers, becoming panic-stricken, cut the traces, and in a few moments the road and the fields on each side of it were covered by a flying crowd of cavalry and artillery soldiers, civilians, gendarmes, loose horses, and vehicles. In spite of the strenuous efforts of the Brigadier-general, the greater part of Murat's brigade fled; many did not pause in their headlong flight until they reached the post-office at Rezonville, and some galloped on until they were stopped by Bazaine's escort, which was waiting for the general to mount, outside his lodgings in Gravelotte. Most of those squadrons which, not having gone to the watering place, had been held in readiness for action galloped after their retreating comrades. The greater part of the two horse batteries of the division, in spite of the exertions of their officers, galloped to the rear with the dragoons, but eventually five guns were brought into action North-west of Vionville, covered by a squadron. These pieces were served mainly by officers and non-commissioned officers, till the impossibility of answering with five guns the fire of three batteries being manifest, General de Forton ordered them to be withdrawn under cover. This was done by hand by some volunteers of Murat's brigade, who had stood firm in spite of the panic.

Du Gramont's Cuirassier brigade, which had bivouaced further to the Eastward, mounted in good order and retired to the vicinity of the Roman road. Valabregue's division, saddling up quickly, retired steadily to near Villers aux Bois.

Major von Körber now advanced his batteries, and then again came into action on the high ground immediately to the West of Vionville where the Tronville-Mars-la-Tour roads meet, firing on French infantry near Flavigny at 1600 yards' range. The 13th cavalry brigade accompanied the advance, and took up a position on the flanks, utilising as much cover as they could obtain. The 12th brigade moved at 9.45 a.m. to the gap East of the Tronville copses (857).*

The 11th brigade (von Barby), deducting two squadrons on detachment, and adding one squadron 2nd Guard Dragoons attached, numbered eleven squadrons. It moved from Xonville at 9.30 a.m. in support of the 13th brigade, and after picking up the 19th Dragoons, which had bivouaced at Puxieux, came into position South-west of Tronville at 10 a.m., just as von Körber's batteries opened from their second position near Vionville. The 13th brigade (von Redern) was then sent by von Rheinhaben towards Vionville, but it came under a heavy fire from the French batteries, which were by this time in action North-east of Vionville, and it then took up a sheltered position behind the Tronville copses.

When Murat's brigade galloped to the Rear through the French infantry, the battalions stood to their arms unmoved by the flight of their cavalry comrades. An old sergeant 55th regiment, alluding to the notice

* See map, No. XIX.

which had just been read out that "the cavalry had returned from their reconnaissance," said sarcastically to his captain, "It appears they are returning rather fast." Frossard's Corps came briskly forward, one division being pushed Southwards into the wood of Vionville, while other infantry regiments seized Vionville, and soon afterwards Flavigny, compelling three of Körber's batteries, after firing case, to limber up and go back. German batteries retire at the walk, but von Körber, appreciating thoroughly the intention of the regulation, as there were no troops near who could be affected by the appearance of a rapid retrogade movement, trotted back to avoid loss from the French skirmishers, who came on with great dash. Captain Bode's battery, sheltered by the ground, maintained its position at the junction of the Mars-la-Tour-Tronville roads. The 12th brigade was so heavily shelled by the enemy's artillery that von Bredow retired it through the Tronville copses, and took up a position on the right of the 11th (von Barby) brigade, near which position von Redern's brigade also took shelter.

At 10 a.m. the heads of the 5th and 6th German infantry divisions arrived in sight, and from the South and West the Infantry and Artillery, coming continuously up, gradually drove the French back. At 11.30 a.m. the Germans got possession of the Southern edge of the plateau (960) (998),* and by an overwhelming artillery fire shelled the French out of Vionville. At 12 noon Colonel von Voights Rhetz, Chief Staff officer 3rd Army Corps, seeing the French were falling back from the reservoir, which, surrounded by trees, lies between Vionville and Flavigny, sent one squadron of the 2nd Guard

* See map, No. XX.

Dragoons and one squadron of the 17th Hussars against them. These squadrons, which at the moment were standing in a depression West of Vionville, had escorted the two Horse batteries of the 10th Corps when they marched from Thiaucourt to join Major Körber. The French infantry, however, stood firm, and the 3rd battalion Chasseurs, which had not been engaged, beat off the cavalry, the squadron of the Guard Dragoons alone having 70 casualties. At the same time the 10th Hussars were sent to the front by General von Alvensleben, commanding the 3rd Army Corps, but the French were too steady to encourage an attack on them, and the Hussars retired. The regiment was then sent by Lieut.-general von Rheinhaben to the North of Vionville to make an attempt on the French right flank, but it was driven back by artillery fire, and eventually halted near the Southern end of the Tronville copses. Von Redern, whose command was temporarily reduced to six squadrons, now received orders to move Southwards to keep up connection between the 6th infantry division, and the 3rd Army Corps infantry, which had come up into line from Gorze. Von Redern, when marching into the valley to Flavigny, where a fierce infantry fight was raging, was joined by the remnants of the squadrons 2nd Guard Dragoons and 17th Hussars. He took cover behind the burning homestead, but it was difficult to find any protection from the bullets of both friends and foes.

Du Preuil's Charge.—When at noon General Frossard saw his men streaming back in disorder towards Rezonville, followed by the Prussian artillery and infantry, he ordered General du Preuil to charge

to the Front and take the pressure off the infantry. At this moment the 3rd Lancers were standing to the South-west of Rezonville in the angle between the Vionville-Chambley-Rezonville roads (915),* and two squadrons advanced towards the Germans; they were then recalled, and again sent forward, but apparently without any definite objective being named. Coming under a hot fire from infantry within 100 yards' range, they swerved off to their right without closing on the enemy, suffering a loss of 32 casualties. The other wing then advanced, but retired before coming under close fire. General du Preuil, on being ordered to attack, had pointed out the undesirability of charging unshaken infantry in close formation and which was, moreover, still distant a mile and a half; but to these objections General Frossard replied, "Attack immediately, or we are all lost." The Cuirassiers of the Guard, in five squadrons (575 sabres), were standing at the time in column on the high ground near Rezonville, but sufficiently retired to avoid the fire of the German guns.

The regiment now deployed into three lines, the two first, each of two squadrons, while the 5th squadron was to follow in reserve. When, at 12.30 p.m., the regiment advanced, the first line started at "a wild gallop," and in order that the pace of the second line might be better regulated, the general placed himself on the directing flank.† The Prussian 52nd regiment (10th brigade) was at this moment moving North-eastwards from Flavigny, and foresaw the impending attack. The skirmishers had time to close,

* See map, No. XX.

† According to Dick de Lonlay, he rode in front of the second line, without drawing his sword, and carrying a riding-cane.

and the 6th and 7th companies, 52nd regiment, and some Fusilier companies, 11th brigade, halted in line "at the shoulder" as the Cuirassiers advanced. On the right or Southern flank of the 52nd were several deployed companies of the 6th division. At first the Cuirassiers' formation was well preserved, but after breaking into the charge at 400 yards' distance, and when still about 250 yards from the Prussian infantry, the line of galloping horses came on some baggage waggons and a quantity of camp equipment which had been thrown down, when the French retreated an hour earlier to avoid the fire of the German Horse batteries; the squadrons, then swerving to their left, crowded together, and were received when at 100 yards' range by "independent firing," which drove them off to the flank, and without any loss to their infantry. The second line came under a hot fire at 300 yards. This ceased presently, to be renewed when the horsemen were but 100 yards distant. This second line was even more broken up by obstacles, and the bodies of those killed in the first line. The third line met a similar fate, and none of them closed on the infantry. The casualties were, 22 officers, 208 of other ranks, 243 horses.

We will now turn to the other side. When Du Preuil advanced, Lieut.-colonel von Caprivi, Chief of the Staff 10th Army Corps, pointed out to General von Redern, whose brigade was standing to the West of Flavigny, the favourable opportunity for a charge, and at 12.45 p.m. he advanced at "the trot." The 17th Hussars, and the remnants of the squadron 2nd Guard Dragoons in column of troops, passed North of the wet meadows lying to the East of Flavigny, and through intervals in the infantry on

towards the French Cuirassiers, who were, however, already retreating. The 11th Hussars moved to the Southward of Flavigny, and followed in echelon in the right-rear, having been delayed in crossing some marshy ground to the South-east of Flavigny. When galloping after the Cuirassiers, Colonel von Rauch, 17th Hussars, saw in his front a battery, at which, followed by a few men, he charged. This battery had been brought up by Marshal Bazaine without any escort, and had just come into action 600 yards South-east of where the Flavigny track joins the high-road, when Colonel von Rauch, followed by 20 Hussars of the 1st squadron, rode into it. The 11th Hussars, who in their advance had cut down several stragglers of the retreating Cuirassiers and infantry, arriving at the same moment, rode into the front of the battery, which had only time to fire a round or two. The right-half battery and the limbers of the left-half got clear away, but the gunners of the left-half battery were all killed. Another Horse battery, further back, having fired on the Prussian Hussars, was also attacked by them and forced to retire, after losing an officer and 27 men. It did not come into action again during the day!! The French Commander-in-Chief and upwards of 100 Staff-officers, who were standing near the first-named battery, were borne away in the flight of the artillery teams. The Marshal was then attacked by a German officer, who, galloping alongside, tried to kill him; but he was rescued eventually by General du Preuil sending forward from Rezonville two squadrons, which drove back the German horsemen who were trying to carry off the left-half battery. The Marshal himself took refuge with the 3rd Rifle battalion on the

high-road where the Flavigny path joins it, his Staff galloping back to Gravelotte. Von Redern's squadrons broke up after a prolonged fast gallop culminating in the exciting pursuit and attack on the guns, and after suffering from the fire of infantry lining the ditch of the main road, they retired. The 11th and 17th Hussars lost in this charge 114 of all Ranks and 104 horses.

Advance of the 6th Cavalry Division.—The division composed of the 14th brigade (von Grüter's) and 15th Brigade (von Rauch), total 18 squadrons and 6 guns, paraded at 5.30 a.m. to cross the Moselle at Corny, three miles South-east of Gorze. The Suspension bridge oscillated so much as to necessitate the men dismounting and crossing in single file, which operation was not completed till 7 a.m. The head of the division reached the plateau about 9.30 a.m., and after driving back some French skirmishers and suffering from an artillery cannonade, came under a brisk infantry fire from men hidden in the Bois de Vionville. It retired down the slope about 11 a.m., one brigade to the Gorze-Vionville road, and the other brigade to the Anconville farm. The brigades were under cover North of the Bois de Gaumont when General von Alvensleben, from his station on Vionville hill, observed the French 2nd Corps falling back, and he sent orders for the division to pursue the enemy. The cavalry were two miles from Vionville, and it was not until 1 p.m. that the division, having ascended the plateau, was ready to attack. This movement was begun by each brigade advancing in squadron columns, Rauch's brigade on the right, with Grüter's brigade in echelon in the left

rear, the latter brigade being formed in two lines. During the hour's interval which had elapsed from the issue of the order to the arrival of the division, the situation had completely changed; instead of broken troops falling back rapidly, there were now in front of the cavalry the Grenadier and Voltigeur divisions of the Imperial Guard, which were forming up and lining the crest of the ridge from the Western side of Rezonville, to the Bois de Vionville. The German artillery was in action on a North-west-South-east line from Vionville, to a point 1000 yards West of Flavigny.

The 6th division, trotting forward through the gap, about half a mile wide, in the line of German guns, tried to open out for attack, but the space was too limited for deployment, and it was still more curtailed on either flank owing to the order of Lieut.-general von Stülpnagel, commanding the 5th infantry division, given to prevent the horsemen masking the fire of the German batteries. Moreover, the squadrons of the 9th and 12th Dragoons, hitherto acting as Artillery escort, had now hurried up into the front line of the 6th division, and the difficulties of deployment were still further increased by the squadrons of Redern's brigade coming back from the attack on the Horse battery Imperial Guards, and from their pursuit of Du Preuil's Cuirassiers. A portion of the 8th division, therefore, only deployed and went forward, the greater part remaining halted in line of squadron columns between Flavigny and the Buxières-Rezonville road, sitting on their horses under both artillery and musketry fire. The small bodies of French cavalry had withdrawn rapidly, and the Germans, suffering from the infantry fire of men concealed in the ditches

bounding the high road, as well as from the batteries North of it, were now convinced that an attack offered no chance of success. General Rauch had been wounded, and his successor, after assuming the command of the leading brigade, which had by this time halted, retired "at the walk" to the West of Flavigny, suffering some loss. Grüter's, the left brigade, in advancing had met on a portion of Bazaine's escort, who were pursuing von Redern's Hussars, and, after disposing of them, then also retired at "the walk" to the Westward of Flavigny. The advance of the cavalry, though not strikingly successful, had gained time for the scattered infantry units to reform, and for the Prussian artillery to take up a more advanced position.

Von Bredow's Charge.

By 1.30 p.m. the situation on the German left flank had become critical. The superior numbers of the enemy, consisting of the 2nd, 6th, and Guard Corps, had inflicted great losses on their enemies, and the 3rd French Corps, from the direction of St. Marcelle, was now threatening the extreme left flank. The last available German infantry Reserve was engaged holding the Northern edge of the Tronville copses. The length of the Prussian line of battle stretched over $5\frac{3}{4}$ miles. The 24th regiment, as early as 11.30 a.m., having been pushed forward through the hollow to the North of Vionville, and up towards the Roman road, had exhausted its ammunition. Its three battalions, with a battalion of the 20th regiment, were lying in one long thin line, and there was no possibility of sending more infantry to their support.

General von Alvensleben, commanding the 3rd Corps, who was the senior officer on the field, observing movements of the enemy which he thought indicated a general attack between the Roman road and the main road, called on the Commander of the 5th cavalry division to send forward a brigade to attack the guns and infantry in action on the ridge to the North-west of Rezonville. These guns not only swept the ridge to the Eastward of Vionville and Flavigny, but were now inflicting heavy loss on the Prussian infantry near the Tronville copses.

The orders delivered to General von Bredow by the Chief of the Staff of the 3rd Army Corps were emphatic, and are thus given in the Regimental History of the 16th Lancers: "To silence the enemy's batteries on the Roman road, cost what it might, and to break through the French infantry there, as far as possible, in order to give breathing time to our own infantry. Perhaps the fate of the battle depends on your attack."

General von Barby (11th brigade) was to advance to the West of the copses against the troops approaching those woods from the direction of Bruville. The 13th Dragoons (12th brigade) had been previously sent in this direction to hold the French infantry in check. When von Bredow received his orders, the two remaining regiments, the 7th Cuirassiers (355 sabres) and 16th Lancers (395 effectives), were halted in line of squadron columns at close intervals on the North-west slope of the Tronville heights. Just after he received the order to attack the troops on the Rezonville ridge, an orderly officer of the 3rd Corps brought instructions for two squadrons to reconnoitre through the woods, and up

to the Northern end of them. It was not known to the general who sent this order, that the infantry seen in the copses were Germans. As the destruction of the reconnoitring squadrons appeared inevitable, lots were drawn to decide on whom the sacrifice should fall. The 3rd squadron of the Cuirassiers and the 1st of the Lancers drew the apparently fatal numbers. In the result neither squadron suffered any loss, and they eventually formed the nucleus on which the survivors of the charge rallied. Before the brigade advanced, the Brigadier-general explained to the officers the Divisional general's intention, which was that the squadrons should ride home on the enemy as far as possible, not pausing to take prisoners, or to gather trophies.

The brigade now moved off to the left, the Cuirassiers leading, crossing the main road about 1000 yards West of Vionville, then passing close to the left flank of Bode's Horse battery in position North of the village, the detachments of which cheered the advancing cavalry, and then trotted 1500 yards in the hollow East of the Tronville copses till it reached the spot where it had stood in the morning until driven back by the French shells. The brigade then wheeled to the right, both regiments being still in squadron columns. Von Bredow, when 1800 yards from the enemy, gave the order "Form line." As the Cuirassiers deployed, the gallop was sounded (2.20 p.m.) before the Lancers had quite completed the deployment. They followed at 150 paces in echelon to the right rear, the 2nd squadron on the right, the 4th on the left. Immediately the gallop was sounded the 2nd squadron was ordered to detach one troop* to cover the right flank, and it

* There were four troops in a squadron.

soon became separated from the remainder of the horsemen.

As the brigade, emerging from the hollow, ascended the hill to the Eastward, the Lancers passed, near the Flavigny-Bruville road, many German wounded infantry, who shouted out, begging that they might not be ridden over. The 2nd, or right squadron, passed through the deserted French bivouac, strewn with camp kettles, helmets, and other signs of a hurried retreat. From the moment of crossing the main road, shells began to fall near the brigade, but without causing appreciable loss. The projectiles were probably unaimed, for the six German batteries near Vionville, firing rapidly on the French batteries on which the attack was to fall, engrossed all the attention of the gunners. The squadrons pressed on at a swinging gallop, and the horses were already blown before the infantry, hidden by the undulating ground, were sighted. Nor had these daring horsemen been as yet observed by the French infantry. The commanding officer of the 16th Lancers had just observed to his adjutant, "I cannot yet see the enemy whom we are to attack," when it came in view, and a shower of bullets saluted the regiments. Volley now succeeded volley; a rapid fire from batteries and machine-guns, and from infantry in the wood near the Roman road, passed mostly over the heads of the squadron, and without causing many casualties. The Cuirassiers first struck on two batteries of the 6th Corps, and on the 9th battalion Chasseurs, whose rolling fire availed nothing towards checking the charge. These two batteries (8th Artillery regiment) were in position near the Roman road, and on the crest which runs thence perpendicularly

to the main road. Behind the right rear of this artillery position stood the 9th Chasseurs, and between them and Rezonville were three battalions of the 93rd regiment, which had been already heavily engaged. This regiment had received no rations, and had had very little to eat the previous evening. The men had dug up some potatoes, and were cooking them at 9.30 a.m., when they were ordered to stand to their arms. Dick de Lonlay puts the 75th, 91st, and 94th regiments as standing between the 9th Chasseurs and 93rd regiments, but it was on these latter and artillery that the attack of the six squadrons fell, though the 91st later fired on the squadrons as they retreated. We learn from French narratives that the 75th and 91st ran out of ammunition about 2.30 p.m.

No. 5 battery, 8th regiment, which was somewhat in advance of the general line, was the first of the two batteries to be overthrown. As the Cuirassiers drew near, it tried to retire at "the gallop," but was at once caught up and wrecked. At 2 o'clock the 9th and 10th batteries, 13th regiment, had been sent forward in support of the artillery, which von Bredow was now attacking. While "on the move" they met the rush of cavalry, and suffered a similar fate to that which befell No. 5 battery. Two more batteries of the 8th regiment, standing further to the Northward, "changed position left back," in order to flank the German cavalry, but their front was masked by the advance of De Forton's division before the batteries could come into action. At the moment the Cuirassiers were closing on the guns, two horse batteries of De Forton's division came up at the gallop to reinforce the guns in front! They were met by the Cuirassiers just as the leading battery came into action; both were

overthrown before they could fire a round! Simultaneously a 12-pounder battery, trotting up to join the front line, met the stream of approaching cavalry, and with a like result. Swerving away to the left, the battery attempted to pass through the battalion intervals of the 93rd regiment, but driving into the middle of a column, it knocked down whole sections of men, upsetting the left wing of the 2nd battalion, and thus made a gap for the Uhlans.

Up to this time the cavalry had encountered the 9th Chasseurs and various batteries only, but had killed 8 officers, 154 artillerymen, and 148 horses. The attack of the Cuirassiers on the guns was assisted by a troop and a half of the left squadron of the Lancers, the remainder of the regiment falling on the infantry in the rear of the guns. As the Lancers approached there was a momentary hesitation in the battalions from the Germans being mistaken for French cavalry; when the error was perceived, the 1st and 3rd battalions tried to form square, but the number of Army Reserve men in the ranks caused so much delay that the formation was incomplete when the Lancers closed on them. Owing to the confusion caused by these events, and to the flight of the artillery through the Ranks, few men took sufficient time to aim, and many fired hastily with their rifles at the hip. Nevertheless, some of the infantry stood firm, though others turned and attempted to run when the lance points were close to them, and thus great slaughter ensued, the infantry breaking up and rushing in large groups towards Rezonville. Individual Frenchmen, however, met their fate bravely, devoted to duty to the last. A non-commissioned officer of the 16th Uhlans speared in succession all three drivers in a team trying

to escape, but, undismayed by such scenes, a French officer, sword in hand, stood in front of his guns, almost alone awaiting the approach of the cavalry, and fought the leading men, vigorously; while a gunner, single handed, fired round after round, till struck down by a lancer of No. 3 squadron. Another tall French gunner, wielding a sponge-pole like a quarter-staff, defended himself successfully against three swordsmen, until at last he was speared. Many of the detachments at the last moment crouched underneath the guns, but were even there reached by the Lancers, and as Bazaine wrote—"in two batteries there was only one unwounded gunner effective"! Nothing could withstand this cavalry torrent, and it still rolled on, wrecking a machine-gun battery in the rear of the infantry. There was now a wild scene of turmoil, small bodies of individual Germans and French fighting hand to hand. The pursuit was continued up to the Rezonville-Villers road, but at last the opportunity for the French cavalry arrived, for von Bredow having trotted 2 miles and galloped 2½, his men were now completely out of hand.

De Forton's division was formed up at this time to the East of the Villers wood, and North of the Roman road. Valabregue's division stood with its right on the Roman road, to the East of the hollow which runs Northwards from Rezonville. As von Bredow's squadrons began to ascend from the low ground immediately North of Rezonville, he saw Valabregue's division and Murat's brigade advancing on his scattered troopers, and on his left rear he heard Du Gramont's brigade, in all 23 squadrons, closing on his men, who were out-numbered in the proportion of five to one. He sounded the "Rally," and endeavoured to

guide his scattered horsemen towards the Rezonville-Vionville road, but, breathless from the long ride and the exertion of fighting, on completely exhausted horses, they in many instances fell victims to the masses of hostile cavalry by whom they were surrounded. The Frenchmen's steeds were quite fresh, while von Bredow's horses could neither answer to rein or spur, and the crowd of men surged slowly backwards towards Vionville, the Germans, who up to this moment had suffered comparatively small loss, selling their lives dearly. Trooper Schobb, 4th squadron 16th Uhlans, who had gained much renown in peaceful "assaults at arms," was, when nearly alone, surrounded by several French Cuirassiers. He first killed one man, then by hitting two horses on the head, made them turn, when he killed both their riders, and escaped.

For ten minutes there was a spectacle of inextricable confusion, pursuing and retreating cavalry, artillery, and infantry soldiers trying to force their way through guns, limbers, and the bodies of the dead and dying men and horses. The 16th Lancers Regimental Standard bearer's horse ran away with him towards the end of the charge, and he shouted to the acting squadron serjeant-major to catch hold of his reins. This he did, and the horse was stopped. About twelve Rank and File collected around the Standard, and they rode back. The party approached the French 93rd regiment, mistaking them for a German corps, but on seeing their mistake, closed together and charged through the infantry, losing only one man killed, and two wounded. As the crowd of combatants turned towards Vionville and Flavigny, some French soldiers (9th Chasseurs, 91st, and 93rd

regiments) having again collected, fired into the Germans, in some cases hitting their own men. When the few fugitives still remaining in the saddle got near Vionville and Flavigny, some German infantry advancing, covered their retreat.

Von Bredow himself retired towards the main road, and his ultimate escape is thus described in the Regimental History of the 20th German regiment, whose men, lying down near the high road, watched the charge: "Under the powerful influence of this drama, the fight seemed for a moment to come to a standstill. This wild cavalry chase is watched with strained attention. Now come a scattered crowd of Cuirassiers past our position, then we see in their rear a senior officer, soon recognized as General von Bredow, who is pursued closely by French Cuirassiers. The French are every moment gaining on the general, whose horse is exhausted; they must soon overtake him, when a soldier of the 11th company, running forward, shoots the leading French officer as he raises his sword to cut the general down. Our men cheer, and the French retire."

Some of the 12th brigade squadrons had pursued to the North of the Roman road, and they, with other fugitives, retired along it into the Tronville copses; and the complete dissolution of von Bredow's men may be gathered from the fact that amongst them on the extreme left were several of the 2nd or right squadron of the Lancers. When the brigade rallied in the hollow near Flavigny, the Cuirassiers numbered only 3 troops, and the Lancers 90 officers and men. Von Bredow reformed these into 2 squadrons, and again advanced on to the high ground, but coming under heavy artillery fire, retired to Tronville, and

eventually went into bivouac about half a mile to the South of the resting-place of the previous night. In the Cuirassiers the casualties amounted to 7 officers, 198 men, and 261 horses. In the Lancers the losses were 9 officers, 222 other ranks, and 224 horses. This loss, though heavy, was small compared to the advantages gained. Not only was the pressure taken off the German infantry, which had run out of ammunition, but the effect on the enemy was even more marked. Marshal Bazaine sent orders that no fresh attack should be made by Canrobert, who, indeed, at this moment was not in a position to advance. The impression made on his troops may be judged from the fact that of the 3 battalions 93rd regiment attacked by the Lancers, the left half of the 1st and 3rd battalions rallied near Rezonville and the right half near the Roman road, *i.e.* at a distance of a mile apart, and then retired to Gravelotte. Dick de Lonlay mentions cases of unnecessary slaughter on both sides, but the German Regimental histories acknowledge gratefully the chivalrous conduct of French soldiers of all ranks towards those who fell into their hands.*

Comments.—There is much to be learnt from a study of the details of the operations near Rezonville, not only from von Bredow's desperate charge, but from errors committed on both sides. Colonel Bonie, a frank critic of the French cavalry, sums up thus their mistakes:—

(*a*) There was no unity of command.

(*b*) Attacks were made on unbroken infantry.

* German writers estimate the French cavalry as 3300 to 3100. Von Bredow started with 750 effectives, and we may assume 150 had fallen when his squadrons were surrounded by the French horsemen.

(*c*) Charges were begun too soon.

(*d*) Ground scouts were not employed.

Colonel Bonie gives most of his attention to the faulty shock tactics of his comrades, but their reconnoitring and security duties also left much to be desired. We see how, on the evening of the 15th August, the Germans carefully guarded their bivouacs, and watched all avenues of approach from the enemy's position, while, on the other hand, the foremost brigade of General de Forton's division, which was scarcely 1½ miles in front of the infantry, had but two outposts, one about a mile distant, at Flavigny, and the other close in to the brigade bivouac. If, however, from these posts, too close in as they were, reconnoitring patrols had pushed out, only 4 or 5 miles, they would have got into contact with the German brigades at Xonville and Suzemont.*

Again, as regards reconnoitring duties, General de Forton reported on the evening of the 15th, that he had been engaged with the German infantry at Puxieux, whereas he had only been in contact with the 13th cavalry brigade (von Redern's).

German critics find great fault with the handling of their cavalry generally, and argue that the 5th division should not only have followed up De Forton's and Valabregue's divisions as they retired at the beginning of the action, but that it might also have inflicted a serious defeat on the French infantry near Rezonville. It should be borne in mind, however, as regards the 5th division, that the German movements were ordered under the

* The instructions for the British cavalry lay down that at daylight the reconnoitring patrols should make sure if there is any enemy within ten miles of the bivouac.

supposition that the French were retreating Northwards on Verdun. It happened, therefore, when Murat's brigade fled from the German artillery fire at 9.30 a.m. that only one brigade of the 5th cavalry division was at hand, the 12th brigade being three-quarters of a mile North-west of Vionville, and the 13th brigade at Xonville, four miles South-west of Vionville, whence De Forton's men were galloping in an Easterly direction. Moreover, it is certain, from the subsequent behaviour of the then intact French infantry, that it would have destroyed any force of cavalry which might have ventured to attack it. It is to be observed also that the repulse of the squadrons 17th Hussars and 2nd Guard Dragoons was effected mainly by a battalion which had not been engaged, and on which the retreating infantry rallied. Throughout the day the only successful attacks made on infantry were either when it was surprised, or when it had been shaken by heavy losses prior to the cavalry attack.

Artillery Fire.—The effect of the guns on stationary targets, or slowly moving infantry at known ranges, was great. French writers describe the fire from the German batteries near Vionville as being appallingly destructive. Their own batteries posted near the Roman road successfully arrested, in spite of the numerous gallant assaults made, any advance of the German infantry to the Rezonville plateau. It is not perhaps safe to draw general deductions from the effect of the French artillery fire, as their shell and fuzes were admittedly faulty. Nevertheless, it should be stated that the effect of their fire on moving targets was insignificant. The 6th cavalry division moved for some time in close formations

at the walk, and trot, backwards and forwards under fire without suffering heavy loss. The Regimental Histories of the 12th brigade show also that no serious loss was incurred during the advance of von Bredow's squadrons, nor until the scattered troopers of the brigade were surrounded by the French cavalry, most of the casualties occurring in the ten minutes' hand-to-hand fighting against overwhelming numbers (5 to 1).

Ammunition.—On the French side near Vionville, at 11.30 a.m., after one and a half hour's fighting, both gun and rifle ammunition was exhausted, and the three battalions of the German 24th regiment, which came into action at 11.30 a.m., had fired away nearly all their ammunition by 2 p.m. The two battalions (10th brigade), which beat off Du Preuil's charge, lost nearly all their officers later, and retired, but not till after their last cartridge had been expended. This early expenditure of ammunition is likely to happen frequently in future, now that the troops carry magazine rifles, and it will give determined and skilful cavalry leaders great opportunities for achieving success.

Cavalry against Cavalry and Infantry.—It appears that no attacks were made at the regulated pace; once launched into the fight, leaders led so fast that the lines broke up into confused mobs of horsemen. The Germans in pursuit of Du Preuil's Cuirassiers were met by two small French squadrons (each about 70 sabres), which, from being held together, drove back their more numerous opponents.

Du Preuil's Charge.—Dick de Lonlay praises the general for his gallantry, and mentions that he charged with a cane in his hand This, if accurate,

is not a desirable procedure.* If the general, riding in front of the second line, had struck the centre of the infantry, the men following might have broken it, and would not have swerved into the intervals, through which they rushed without closing on their foes.

On the other hand, General von Bredow led his men with the greatest determination; but there can be no doubt that the pace was too hurried, and the horses were unnecessarily distressed before he closed on the enemy. The undulating character of the ground contributed greatly to the success of the 12th brigade. General von Wright, who served throughout the war, and, after it, commanded in succession a brigade, and a division of cavalry quartered at Metz, used to take his officers on to the field and show them how the undulating ground concealed the approach of the six squadrons. Von Bredow probably understood that the exceptional nature of the task assigned to him relieved him of the duty of keeping back a portion of his command to act as supports—as his namesake did so effectually at Tobitschau in 1866. The instructions† given by the Chief of the Staff 3rd Army Corps were partly the cause of the heavy loss incurred, for had the brigade been rallied to its right after it had ridden through the infantry, the greater portion of it might have got back safely. It is difficult to excuse the senior general on the spot for not supporting von Bredow, as the 6th cavalry division was close at hand. One regiment of von Redern's (13th) brigade was, indeed, brought up just as the

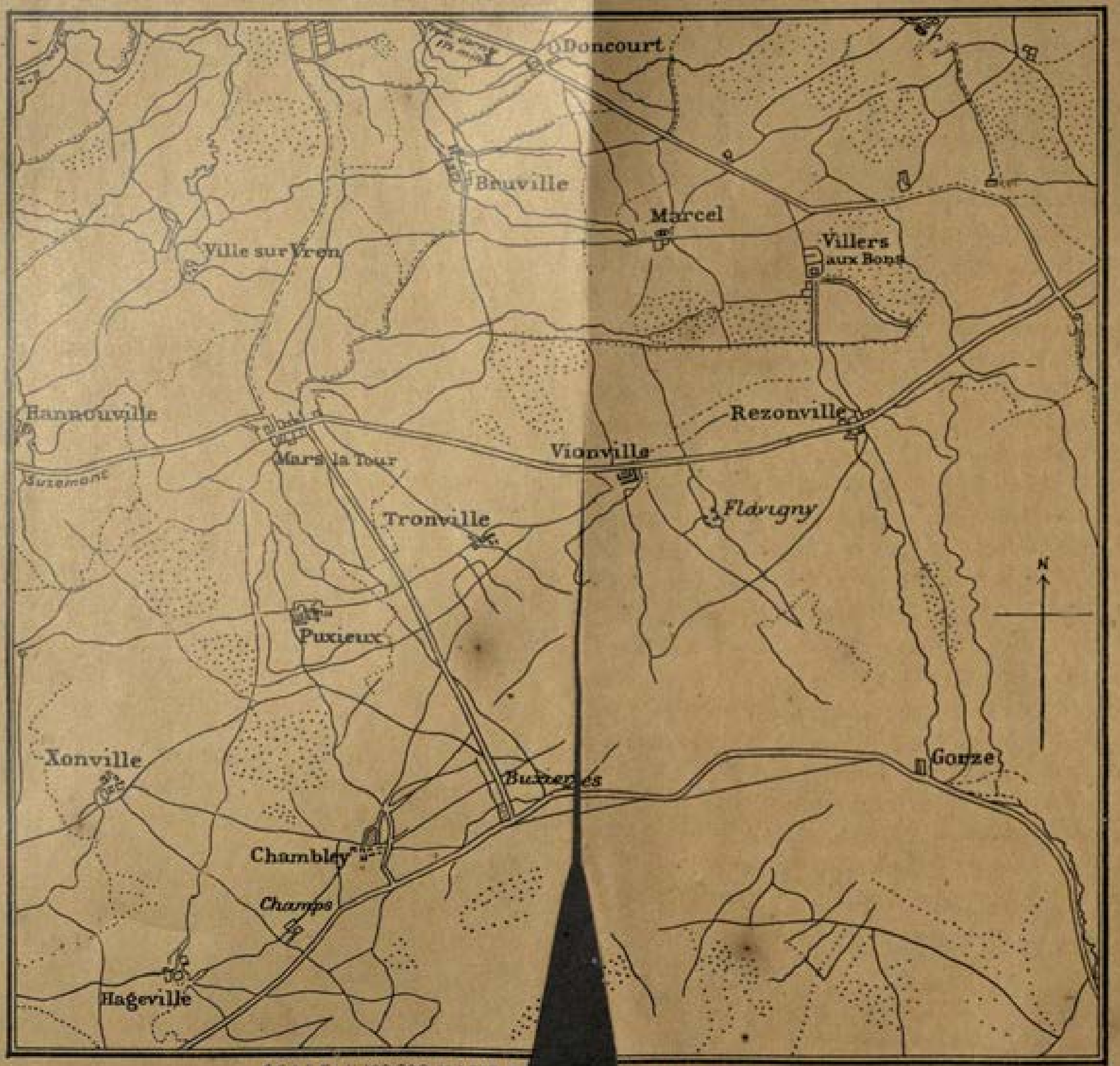
* Colonel Bonie states he rode on the right of the second line to regulate the pace.

† Quoted on page 225.

French Cuirassiers ceased to pursue, but did not engage them, before they drew back behind their infantry, as it might have done.

Contradictory deductions have been drawn from von Bredow's charge by partisan writers, one side claiming that the two cavalry divisions, if properly handled, might have wrecked all Canrobert's Corps, while others urge that the heavy loss of the 12th brigade (about 54 per cent.) proves the folly of thus employing horsemen. The loss, however, although heavy, was much less than in some infantry regiments, the Fusilier battalion 48th regiment losing all its officers between 10 and 11 a.m. I believe, if von Bredow had been properly supported, the result would have been that some of the 42 guns he wrecked, and which his men were bringing away when De Forton advanced, would have been carried back to Vionville, and probably with only half the loss the 12th brigade actually incurred.

Unfortunately, it was not till General von Bredow started on his heroic but desperate mission that General Prince Frederick Charles heard, when eighteen miles off, at Pont à Mousson, of the serious battle which had been in progress since 9.30 a.m. Had he been present the cavalry would doubtless have been handled on a definite plan; but von Bredow showed what horsemen can achieve if vigorously led to the attack at an opportune moment.



THE COUNTRY ABOUT MARS-LA-TO ION FOUGHT 16TH AUGUST, 1870.

[To face p. 238.

MOUNTED INFANTRY.

MOUNTED INFANTRY.

I BELIEVE that in wars of the future, not only will Mounted Infantry be employed, in combination with other arms, on the Continent, but that England, with its comparatively small population, and its enormous extent of Colonial possessions, must inevitably be forced to employ, more and more every year, animals of some kind to convey infantry soldiers to the spot at which they are required to fight on foot.

Since the days when the late Field-Marshal Sir John Fox Burgoyne wrote, "the art of applying Mounted Infantry to the greatest advantage is as yet unknown," not only has the use of Mobile infantry been greatly developed, but the military knowledge of all British officers has ripened, because they have seen or read of infantry being transported on many kinds of animals in the last quarter of a century, in order to obtain increased mobility. This fact, coupled with the maturer knowledge of my comrades, has disarmed some of the hostile feelings which they first experienced towards the revival of the "Dragoon." There are, however, still some cavalry officers who argue that there is no necessity to teach selected infantry marksmen how to ride, alleging that cavalry on foot can do all that infantry can accomplish, and do it as well, if not better. These enthusiasts assert that it is possible so to train men as to render them equally

efficient on horseback, as they can be made perfect when on foot; equally confident in meeting an enemy whether armed with sword, lance, or rifle. That this is an error there can, I think, be no doubt.

The question, however, of the effect on the nerves of infantry, when they see determined horsemen advancing to attack them, may, to some extent, be gauged by any one of my readers who has seen a runaway horse galloping wildly down a street, and who reflects on his own feelings when there is apparently no possible avenue of escape ere the horse approaches him. Two summers ago, a horse drawing a hansom cab, being without a driver, ran away down Pall Mall, and collided with the lamp-post at the foot of St. James Street. The lamp-post, which was of the ordinary kind, of cast-iron, sunk two or three feet into the earth, was protected by four short pedestals of solid stone. I did not actually see the collision, but when I arrived shortly afterwards, the horse was lying with a fractured shoulder-blade indeed, but the cast-iron lamp-post was broken off short at the point of impact, and two of the stone pedestals had been uprooted from their beds. If it were possible to obtain the same amount of determination from riders, as that which inspired the unfortunate horse when terrified by the hansom banging at his heels, all cavalry charges would succeed, in spite of every sort of missile which might be poured by defenders on their assailants.

There were in the French army three brothers, Alphonse, Edouard, and Auguste de Colbert, all cavalry generals under Napoleon; and certainly, as regards hand-to-hand fighting, they saw more of war than any one family in that period of bloody

battles, which began with the French Revolution and terminated at Waterloo. Edouard, who was severely wounded six times during his career, but who lived to write, at sixty-nine years of age, his "Souvenirs inédits," when describing how he wished the last stage of a charge to be delivered, finished up as follows: "What I should like to see would be, that at ten paces from the enemy the bits should all drop out of the horses' mouths. If that happened, however strong the enemy might be, he would be overthrown to a certainty."

If we look back to history, it is interesting to notice the tendency there has invariably been amongst all men who habitually use a fire-arm to trust to it as an offensive weapon. There are probably no cavalry officers who have studied the history of their Arm of the Service but who admit that under Frederick the Great it reached the zenith of its power. This, however, was not effected till he revolutionized the system in vogue at the date of the battle of Mollwitz, where his cavalry, trusting in their fire-arms, were thoroughly beaten. The king then issued two regulations, to which much of the further success of his horsemen was due: firstly, "Any cavalry officer awaiting an attack will be cashiered;" secondly, "All attacks are to be made without firing, and the last 200 yards at the gallop."

After the death of Frederick the Great, "Dragoons" were trained alternately on horseback and on foot, in the manner ridiculed by Rogniat,* who wrote: "How absurd is the manner of training our Dragoons! When mounted they are taught that no infantry can resist the impetuosity of their charges; when drilling

* "Considerations sur l'Art de la Guerre."

on foot they are taught to consider themselves invulnerable against cavalry. It is from these causes they are despised by both Horse and Foot."

Napoleon, who had himself, before he was First Consul, formed in Egypt a corps of selected infantrymen, who were mounted on camels till they reached the scene of action, answered, from St. Helena, the criticisms on the altered system which he, as Emperor, had approved, and which consisted in that double training satirized by General Rogniat.

For the purpose of a British Army, however, Napoleon conceded the whole argument when he laid down that 3000 men trained to fight both mounted and on foot ought to be equal in fighting power to 2000 infantry!!

It is also remarkable that Marmont,* while recording that he had a mean opinion of Rogniat as a tactician, nevertheless adopts and reiterates all his views as to the training of "Dragoons," adding that originally they were only "Mounted Infantry," and they should have preserved that character.

General Jomini, while advocating the employment of "Mounted Infantry," observes: "To make cavalry into foot soldiers, or a soldier who is equally good on horseback or on foot, is very difficult." Jomini, less sound in his knowledge of human nature than was the greatest Soldier of the century, ends up with the conclusion that "the bravest men, whether on foot or on horseback, will always gain the victory." That clever strategist often criticised adversely the plans of the Greatest of modern soldiers, and frequently with justice; but his knowledge of the

* "De l'esprit des Institutions militaires."

feelings which actuate men in battle cannot be compared with that possessed by Napoleon. The remark that the bravest men will always win, though true under precisely similar conditions, is so misleading as to indicate that Jomini did not realize what all European nations now understand by "Fire discipline." Neither Napoleon nor Jomini had ever led a cavalry attack; but the Emperor had witnessed, in twenty years, more charges than any other person in the world, and, as may be read in Chapter III., showed, at the Somo-Sierra mountain, how to utilize the most potent feelings in the human heart, in order to achieve success. Sir Charles Napier carried through all his operations, in the desert of Scindh, by the formation of a fighting camel corps, in organizing which he followed the principle of the force raised by Napoleon in Egypt forty years earlier. When, in 1858–59, we were chasing Tantia Topee, who was supposed to be the instigator of the Cawnpore massacre, I served as Staff officer to a column composed of all arms, in which the infantry, being mounted on camels, covered 40 miles on six successive days, or a total of 240 miles, halting merely for two or three hours at a time to feed the animals.

If we turn to the experience gained in the war of the Northern *v.* the Southern States of America, we find General Rosser, writing in 1868, three years after the war, records, "Cavalry was not used on the battle-field as under Ney and Murat, because it was not cavalry;" and he goes on to lay down that, as a rule, in America, cavalry should never be detached from the Main army without being accompanied by Artillery and Mounted rifles. Rosser, who had

distinguished himself in the war, adds: "The cavalry soldier should never be dismounted to fight if you expect him to ride over masses of infantry, and that he should be educated to believe that nothing can withstand a well-executed cavalry charge."

Now, whatever may have been the prevailing thought formerly, there is no doubt that, in these days, the notion of forming a Jack-of-all-trades is not in accordance with the procedure in any other profession. On the contrary, a characteristic of the present age is division of work, and the substitution of skilled for unskilled labour; and nowhere are the effects more marked than in the organization of cavalry and infantry. In a lecture I gave a quarter of a century ago I foretold the separation of the Field from the Garrison artillery, which has now been virtually decided upon, and on similar grounds. Personally, however, I do not go as far as did General Rosser, in saying that the cavalry soldier should never be dismounted to fight, and prefer to modify that opinion and state that "cavalrymen should never be dismounted to fight when there is suitable ground for their employment on horseback." General Rosser possibly had in his mind the habits of his countrymen, nearly all of whom learn to shoot with pistols in boyhood; many can shoot steadily from the saddle, and this fact would add to the temptation of using fire-arms in a charge, which custom is generally fatal to achieving permanent success. I believe, moreover, there was another cogent reason, besides that given by General Rosser, why our brave cousins did but little fighting on horseback, and that was the unsuitability of the country. An officer who visited the battle-fields in America stated, in a lecture

given at Aldershot in 1892, that at Brandy station, the scene of the most important action by Mounted Arms—where, however, the cavalry charged in columns, as all untrained horsemen must do—the largest clear space was under 800 yards in extent.

Since I pleaded, in 1874, for the establishing of a corps of Mounted Infantry, it has been carried out by enthusiastic and hard-working officers, who, at Aldershot, have trained 150 officers and about 4000 men * in the last seven years, besides those trained in South Africa and in Egypt. I purposely exclude India, as in that country the instruction is, I am informed, limited to teaching men to ride, and to clean their horses.

Some of my comrades of the cavalry Arm no longer object to infantry soldiers being mounted on ponies or mules, in order to act as scouts for an infantry battalion, or to do orderly duty, but they still oppose the idea of Mounted Infantry being attached to a cavalry division in the field. To such officers I would say, read in Kaye's "History of the Sepoy War" how General Nicholson, pursuing the rebel soldiery who had destroyed the cantonment of Sealkote, collected, for the transport of his infantry, every horse, pony, and carriage in the district; or how (1894-96), in the cavalry manœuvres in Austria, a battalion of Rifles was sent forward in carts to support the advanced Cavalry division; or, better still, study what Marshal von Moltke wrote in 1876: "Squadrons operating in front will be supported by an infantry division. The object of the cavalry is not to remain concentrated as for the decision of a

* Some of them have been up twice for training, and should therefore be deducted from the aggregate number.

battle, but its divisions will advance in various directions, and will push forward detachments until it is ascertained where the enemy's main forces are collected. These detachments can be supported by small bodies of infantry in waggons." *

Von Moltke's book, which I quote, was published only this year, and it is therefore the more interesting to observe the progress of thought amongst the senior officers of our Army. The General officers who commanded the cavalry brigade at Aldershot during the time I was in charge of the District, spoke very decidedly to the same effect as that laid down by the greatest of strategists. General Sir Drury Lowe, in March, 1889, addressing the Military Society, after a lecture, observed: "The use of horses and ponies by infantry as a means of locomotion to enable them to keep up with cavalry, will be an enormous advantage to a cavalry force;" and again, two years later, Major-General Sir Baker Russell, who had succeeded to the command of the Aldershot Cavalry Brigade, speaking before the same society, was equally emphatic in praise of the Mounted Infantry as then organized at Aldershot, and he went on to argue that a cavalry division should be pushed at least thirty miles ahead of an Army Corps, with the Mounted Infantry regiment forming its moving Base.

In my opinion, however, it is as an escort to Horse and Field artillery that the Mounted Infantry will be of the greatest use when acting with other Arms. With the cavalry division sent on in advance, there

* Moltke's "Militärische Werke," herausgegeben vom Grossen Generalstabe; Grupp L., No. 3, Aus den Dienstschriften des Krieges, 1870–71; Erst Abtheilung, Der Krieg bis Zur Schlacht von Sedan.

will always be some Horse artillery, and although the Germans have never quite adopted our system, yet one of their recent well-known writers advocates that with this advanced Horse artillery force should be sent Mounted Infantry, well supplied with cartridges, to be transported on carriages.

There is scarcely any form of escort for guns that can be devised more appropriate than Mounted Infantry, with one or more machine-guns. Such may remain out of sight until the batteries are attacked, and not only will they thus secure the safety of the artillery, which otherwise will inevitably fall a prey to an enterprising cavalry Leader, but they will also enable the commander of Horse artillery to act with much greater audacity, and consequently more effect, than he could if he were not similarly protected. Prince Kraft, though an acknowledged authority on Artillery, cannot be quoted with the same assurance as regards Cavalry, but I think as a historian he was scrupulously fair, and he wrote: "Since the Seven Years' War the pursuit by cavalry came to a stop as soon as they lost the certainty that they were being followed up by infantry." *

When the advanced guard of the British army, formed by the Light division, met the Russians near the Bulganak river on the 19th September, 1854, General Sir George Brown ordered some picked shots (2nd battalion Rifle Brigade) to ride on the guns of "C" troop Royal Horse Artillery, the limber gunners making way for them and standing on the trail handles.

During the Indian Mutiny of 1857–58, the rebel

* "Letters on Cavalry," by Prince Kraft zu Hohenlohe Ingel fingen, translated by Colonel N. L. Walford, R.A.

sepoys were using the "Brown Bess" musket, which had an effective range of 100 yards only, but there must be many old officers yet serving who, like myself, remember that latterly we never went into action in Central India without the Artillery demanding, and obtaining, a few good shots to accompany their batteries. These marksmen were carried on the limbers and axle-tree seats, in addition to the gunners.

It must be remembered, also, that we are not singular in our experience. In Tonquin, and in Algeria, the French carry infantrymen on animals of all sorts. In the latter country, by allotting a small mule to every two soldiers, from 45 to 50 miles have been accomplished in 24 hours, and 140 miles in three days.

There can be no doubt that, for the British Army, which must necessarily be employed more frequently in Savage than in European warfare, and over extensive tracts of country, such as are found in South Africa, trained and picked Mounted Infantry will prove of immense advantage, to the Army generally, in the future as it has done in the past, and I therefore rejoice that, apparently, the system of training a portion of such has been permanently adopted in our Service.

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